

S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

A N D

P R A Y E R S

Suited to

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

By the late REVEREND

Mr. *JOHN HOLLAND*,
AUTHOR of two SERMONS on INTEMPERANCE.

Published from the *Author's* Manuscript, at the Request of many of the *Subscribers*.

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FIRST VOLUME.



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S E R M O N I.

MEN the OFFSPRING of GOD.



Acts xvii. 28.

For we are also his Offspring.



HENCE came I? From what
SOURCE did I derive my Ex-
istence? Is a Question, which
ariseth, some time or other, in
the Minds of all Men. *Milton* has describ'd
our Great Fore-Father *Adam*, when he first
found himself in Being, as proposing it to all
the Creatures around him,

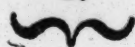
———“ *Thou, Sun, said he, fair Light,*
“ *And thou enlighten'd Earth, so fresh and gay,*
“ *Ye Hills and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods and*
“ *Plains,*

B

“ *And*

SERM.

I.



*“ And ye that live and move, fair Creatures,
“ tell;*

“ Tell, if ye saw, How came I thus? How here?

And, when he could gain no Information in this important point, he is represented as oppress'd with Anxiety and Thoughtfulness

————— *“ When Answer none return'd,
“ Pensive I sat me down. —————*

The Joy, it seems, with which his Heart overflow'd upon the first Sight of the fresh and blooming Creation, was dash'd with Perplexity, when he found himself unable to account for his own Original.

It is no wonder, that *Adam's* Descendants should inherit his Curiosity in this respect: For upon what Subject could reasonable Creatures more worthily exercise their Understandings, than in searching after the Cause of all things, and particularly of their own Existence? But the greater Part have been so unhappy, as to fall into gross and childish Mistakes concerning it. Some have not been ashamed to own themselves the Creatures of blind Chance. Others have imagined, that Men have sprung from one another in an endless series of Generations.

BUT,

Men the Offspring of God.

3

SERM.

I.

BUT, that there has been an Eternal Succession of Men upon Earth, is very incredible : For, besides the Testimony of the Holy Scriptures against it ; we find, both in the Works of Nature, and in the Arts of human Life, the most evident proofs ; not only, that this World, and the race of Mankind have sometime had a Beginning ; but also, that they were produced not many thousand Years ago. Why else did Arts so lately arrive to any tolerable perfection ? Why do they still admit of daily Improvements ? Or, whence comes it, that no History is extant, which will carry us up to a greater distance from our own Times ?

AND tho' we suppose, what is plainly false ; that the Generations of Mankind have Succeeded each other from Eternity ; yet this will not account for the production of One Individual among them : unless, indeed, you will assert, that the Child is the Creature of the Parent ; than which, nothing can be more absurd. If our Parents had made us, they must certainly have had a perfect Knowledge of what they themselves had contriv'd and form'd. But since they understand so little of our Frame, it is manifest they were

B 2

only

SERM. only the Instruments of conveying us into
 I. Life ; and not the real Causes of our Being.

As to those, who ascribe our Creation to Chance ; we may desire them to consider ; whether they can find any thing in these curious material Frames, which gives the least ground to suspect, they are fortuitous Productions. If any one, meeting with but an ill-form'd Statue or Picture ; should say it was made by Chance ; would he not justly be accounted a Fool ? What then are they to be esteem'd, who say the same of the Human Body ? which is an infinitely finer and more admirable Work than the most skilful Statuary or Painter could ever produce. And, were it possible, as it is not, that our *Bodies* should have resulted from the casual motions of Matter, we should still be to seek for the Origin of our *Minds* ; since it cannot be conceived, that the wonderful Powers of Thought and Reason, can arise from any Combination of material Particles.

In reality, whoever knows himself, and attentively considers his own Nature, can hardly doubt, but he *is the Offspring of God*. For, in the first place ; How many plain Footsteps of the divine Art appear, when we
 con-

Men the Offspring of God.

5

SERM.

I.



contemplate the surprizing Fabrick of the Human Body? If we attend to the Comeliness and Dignity of the Whole; or to the Structure, Disposition and Use of the several Parts; if we consider the Erectness of its Posture, which enables us the better to survey the Works of God: the Countenance, expressing by its different Airs the Motions of the Soul; the Organs of the Senses, how curiously They are formed, how conveniently they are disposed; the Eyes in the highest Station, to command the larger Prospect; These, and the Smell so placed, as to be at Hand to judge of the Goodness of our Food; and the Feeling diffused all over the Body; that when any Part is injur'd, we may be apprized of it; If we observe moreover, what pains Nature has taken to enable us to express articulate Sounds; and to what a Variety of Motions the Hands are adapted, for exercising Arts and ministring to the rest of the Body; not to mention the thousand wonderful Contrivances, which are concealed within; I say, If we take only this Superficial View of our Bodies, we shall have abundant Reason to cry out with the Psalmist, that *we are fearfully and wonderfully made*; and to conclude,

Pf.cxxxix.

14

B 3

that

SERM.

I.



that a Machine consisting of such an infinite Number of Parts, all of which are so accurately wrought, so nicely adjusted, so useful to the whole, can be the Work of none but a *Divine* Artist.

BUT we shall meet with still more striking Evidences of our Celestial Descent, if we survey the Nature and Properties of the *Soul*, and principally the Powers of *Reason*, which gives us the Dominion over all Earthly Creatures ; and by which an endless Multitude of Arts have been invented for the Use and Embellishment of Life. By this we are enabled to trace the Origin of Ourselves, and of other Beings, and to contemplate the great Author of the Universe. Our Reason, which is limited by no narrow Bounds of Place or Time, which traverses the past and future Eternity, which carries its Researches into the most distant Regions of the Globe, and beyond this Globe into the Heavens themselves, did not certainly proceed, either from Chance, or our Parents, but from God the only fountain of Intelligence.

As to the Materials of which our Body is compos'd, we know from whence they were taken. The small Portion of *Earth*, which
makes

Men the Offspring of God.

7

SERM.

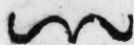
I.

makes a part of it, is borrowed from a vastly larger Mass. The Fluid Part, from an immense Ocean of Fluids. And the small Quantities of the other Elements, that compose our Frame, from the great Funds of each, which God has provided. But from what Source did we derive the Principle of Thought, the excellent Spirit, unless from that infinite Mind, which pervades and actuates Universal Nature?

WHENCE, but from above, was it given to Man, that he alone of all earthly Beings, should be capable of discerning the Order, and admiring the Beauty of the Creation? And however mean our Nature is sometimes represented, it has certain moral Principles inherent in it, which points out its Heavenly Extraction. Such is our Sense of what is Laudable and Good, in all our Actions and Manners. Such also are those Affections, which incline us to engage in Society, and mutually to assist and oblige one another; As Humanity, Gratitude, Friendship and Benevolence; which beginning at our Relations and Neighbours, reaches forth beyond them, and sometimes embraceth the whole Race of Mankind. Thus we are formed

SERM.

I.



Gen. ii.

7.

Gen. i.

26, 27.

with Propensities to Goodness, Righteousness and Mercy; and made capable of resembling the most glorious Being in the Universe, in his most glorious Perfections. And can it be imagined that a Creature furnished with such Divine Faculties is the Work of Chance, and not of a Divine and Perfect Mind? In two Senses, therefore, we are the *Offspring of God*. We not only derive our Existence from him, which is common to us with the inferior Creatures; but we have also the Honour of being related to him in an Higher and Distinguishing Sense: For the Spirits He has given us bear upon them no mean resemblance of their Heavenly Father. Upon the whole it appears, that Reason conspires with Scripture in declaring that *GOD formed our Bodies of the Dust of the Earth and Breath'd into them Living Souls*; and also, that *He created us after his own Image*.

HAVING thus briefly Illustrated the Truth contain'd in the Text; let us see what useful Inferences may be drawn from it. And,

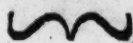
FIRST. Since we are *the Offspring of God*, let us be cautious not to undervalue our own Nature,

Men the Offspring of God.

9

SERM.

I.

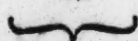


Nature. It is no less possible for us to think too meanly, than too highly of ourselves. As he would be very much mistaken, who should esteem Human Nature equal to the Angelic; so he would be as far wide of Truth, who should imagine Mankind no wiser than Brutes; no better than Devils. Which is the more common Mistake is not perhaps so easy to determine, as which is the more pernicious. For it is Evident, One, that conceives exalted Ideas of his own Dignity, will be in less Danger of derogating from the Honour of his Maker, and of acting an unworthy and mean part in Life, than he, who has form'd too abject and low an Opinion of himself.

THOUGH Insolence is justly detested, yet, doubtless, there is such a Thing as a decent and virtuous Pride, which inspires a Generous Disdain of every thing that is Mean and Base. Upon this Account, at least, we may certainly be allowed to think well of ourselves, because we are *the Sons of God*, and have the Image, though but an imperfect Image, of our Father stamped upon our Minds. Could you trace your Descent from some earthly Prince, no body would be able to endure

SERM.

I.



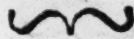
endure your Boasting. And is it not a juster Foundation for glorying, that you are immediately Descended from the Immortal God, who excels all Earthly Princes infinitely more, than they excel the meanest of Mortals?

YET some Men seem to take an unaccountable Pleasure in disparaging their own Nature, and confessing themselves much worse than we have good reason to believe they are. I suppose, indeed, by this extravagant Humility, they think to promote the Glory of God, as if they added to Him whatever they detract from Themselves. But to me it seems, that by reviling Mankind, and representing them as Naturally and Universally Corrupt, they unwarily cast a Reproach upon the Author of their Being. For, if the Faults and Blemishes of a Work argue Imperfection in the Artist, and if every Human Creature, being the Work of God, is turned out of his Hands naturally vicious, it will not be easy to vindicate Heaven from Blame. Let us then be careful, that we so humble ourselves, as not to dishonour our Maker; and not forget when we are confessing our Meanness, that we were quickened by

Men the Offspring of God.

II

by the *Breath* of God, and made by *Him* SERM.
in his own Likeness. I.



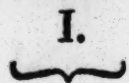
IN the second place. Let it be our Concern to act Worthy of our Heavenly Extraction, and of the high Rank we hold in the Universe. Though by means of the Body we are related to Dust and Worms; yet by our Understanding and Reason we may claim Kindred with Immortal Spirits; with Angels and with God Himself. Let us therefore apply ourselves chiefly to cultivate that Alliance, which is the more honourable to us; maintaining the Superiority of our Minds over the Body and the things, which belong to it, and endeavouring to improve them in real Excellence.

A PERSON, that is come of an honourable Stock, disdains to engage in Vulgar Employments, because he regards them, as beneath his Birth and Quality. In like manner, when you are invited by the prospect of Advantage to practice Injustice and Deceit; when mean Pleasures solicit your Pursuit, or Injuries prompt you to submit to your Passion; call to mind your Birth and Dignity, and scorn it as below your Heaven-born Soul

to

SERM.

I.



to defile itself with Guilt, and consent to be a Slave to the Appetites of a Brute, or the Passions of a Savage.

AGAIN, Thirdly. Since we are all the *Offspring of God*, we ought to look upon Every Man as our Brother, and treat him accordingly. As all Men are united in one Family, under God their common Head and Parent, we should embrace them all with sincere Benevolence; not confining our Affection to any of our Kindred to the Exclusion of the rest, but make it of equal Extent with the Relation itself. Has any one offended you? You ought still to love him, as your Brother, for no Injuries can dissolve your Relation to him, nor justify an Alienation of Mind from him. Is he of a different Nation or Religion? but all Men of all Nations and Religions in the World, are descended from *Your FATHER*, and consequently are *Your BRETHREN*.

LET us hear, to this purpose, the sentiments of an excellent *Heathen*. If, says he, those things are True, which Wise Men have maintained concerning the Relation between God and Man; what remains; but, that if
any

Men the Offspring of God.

13

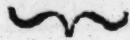
any Man ask you, of what Country you are? SERM.

You answer like *Socrates*; not that you are an *Athenian* or a *Corinthian*; but that you are a CITIZEN of the WORLD. For, why do you call yourself an ATHENIAN, and not rather take your *Name*, from that particular Spot on which your Body was cast, at your Birth? Or is it not manifest, you call yourself an ATHENIAN from that Place which is *greater* and more *comprehensive*; and which contains not only the inconsiderable Spot and the whole House, in which you were born, but also the Society, of which your Ancestors were a Part, and in which yourself and your Family are included. He therefore who having considered the Administration of the Universe, finds it to be one great Family and Commonwealth, under the Conduct of GOD, the Parent and supreme Governor of All, from whom every Being derives its Original, but to whom intelligent Natures are in a peculiar manner allied, as partaking of the Divine Wisdom and Reason, why should not such an one regard himself, as a Fellow-Commoner and Citizen of the World? Why not as a Son of
GOD?

I.

SERM.

I.



GOD? Why not as the near Relation, even the Brother of all Men?

HENCE also we may learn, not to despise any of our Fellow Creatures upon account of the Meanness of their Parentage, seeing in Reality they are all sprung from no meaner a Being than God himself. You would not despise, perhaps you would reverence the Children of an earthly Monarch: And certainly a Son of the Most High is not an Object worthy of your Contempt. Considered in this Light, Man is really a Venerable Creature; let the Circumstances attending his Birth and Fortune be what they will. Do you treat another with Insolence, because he is not, and you are, descended from a Gentleman? Even admit, you were the Son of a LORD or a KING; yet he, whom you despise, may justly avow a much nobler Descent, than that, which inspires you with all this Vanity. Excepting only Virtue and Wisdom, those things are but mere trifles, by which one Man is distinguished from another. In all other Important Respects, we are so much upon a Level, that the most Exalted among us has no Reason to look with Contempt upon any
of

Men the Offspring of God.

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SERM.

I.

of his Neighbours. If we take two Men equal in Personal Merit, the one out of the highest, the other out of the lowest Rank in human Life; the Superiour, turn himself which way he will, can find no better Ground of Boasting, than what will suit equally with the most Despised Mortal among us, amidst all the Infirmities and Distresses, with which we see him surrounded. For what can either of them say greater of Himself, than what each may say with equal Justice; that he is *the Offspring of God, Formed in the Image of his Heavenly Father.*

LASTLY, As we are *the Offspring of God* we may safely confide in his Paternal Care and Goodness. He will not despise the Work of his Hands, nor overlook the meanest of his Creatures; much less those whom his Image forbideth us to regard as mean. Though we should live in Obscurity and low Circumstances, though insolent Men should disdain to take any Notice of us; yet if we live in the Practice of Righteousness, and the Fear of God, we may rest assured, he will continually regard us with a propitious Eye, and not fail to provide for
our

SERM.

I.

Pf. ciii. 13.

our Welfare. *As a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord Loveth them that fear him.*

AND is not this enough to inspire us at all times with a fearless and joyful Security? Were we allied to some Great Man, we should place no small Value on his Countenance and Protection; esteeming it a good Defence against Insult and Danger: And is it a smaller Privilege, and of less force to banish Fear and Sorrow from our Hearts, that we have the Divine Being for our Father and Guardian? Compare together GOD and Man. The one you will find weak, imprudent, confin'd to a Place, fickle and mortal. The other, almighty, immortal, unchangeable, ever present with us, and of infinite Wisdom! The former is destitute of all the Qualifications proper to create a full Confidence in him: The latter is possess'd of them All in the highest Perfection. GOD is both able and willing, to make us, in this World, as Happy as we can bear; and in the World to come as Happy as we can Wish to be.

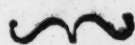
LET us, therefore, look upon ourselves whether in Life or Death, as continually secure under his Protection. Only we should ever be mindful, that his Favour towards
us,

Men the Offspring of God.

17

SERM.

I.



us, depends upon this, and no other Condition, that we do not make ourselves unworthy of it. If we do but sincerely endeavour to imitate the Example of our heavenly Father in Holiness, Justice and Mercy; He will both guard us safe through this Childhood of our Being; and afterwards conduct us into a State, where we shall be eternally improving our Resemblance of him; which in this world is, at best, but very imperfect.



VOL. I.

C

S E R.



S E R M O N II.

The Folly and Mischief of SUPERSTITION.



Pfalm L. 21.

*—Thou thoughtest, that I was altogether
such a one as thyself.---*



IN Religion all depends upon the Opinion we entertain concerning GOD. If this be *Just*, it will naturally produce in us true Piety ; and contribute to the Comfort, as well as Holiness of our Lives. If it be *False* and *Erroneous*, it will lead us into Superstition of one kind or another ; which tends, at once, to corrupt our *Manners*, and fill our *Minds* with Distress and Terror. In a point of so much

The Folly and Mischief of Superstition.

19

SERM.

II.

much Moment, one might expect, Mankind would be particularly cautious not to run into Mistakes ; but he that has the least Acquaintance with the World, either in his own or former Ages, must be sensible, that in no Point they have fallen more universally into gross Errors, than upon the subject of a Deity. If we enquire, how they came to be led into these unhappy Mistakes ; we shall find the Reason generally to be, what is suggested in the Text ; they presume that God is altogether, or in a great measure, such a one as themselves. Hither, as to the Fountain, we may easily trace, almost all the forms of Superstition that have appeared in the World.

HENCE Men have conceived and represented God, as cloathed in *human Form*, and subject to the like Affections and Passions with themselves. From these Principles it was Easy, and almost Unavoidable, for them to infer, that whatever administered most to their own Delight or Advantage, could not fail of being most acceptable to their God. When, therefore, they wanted to express their Gratitude towards Him for His past Benefits, or to engage his future Favours,

C 2

they



S E R M O N II.

The Folly and Mischief of SUPERSTITION.



Pfalm L. 21.

*—Thou thoughtest, that I was altogether
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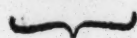
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they

The Folly and Mischief of Superstition.

SERM.

II.



they could think of no better way than to present Him with the Fruits of the Earth, the Beasts of the Field, or any Thing which they found most subservient to the Wants, and Grateful to the Senses of Human Nature. Thus they kept up, in their own Imaginations, a sort of Trade or Commerce between Heaven and Earth; and while God serv'd them with the Blessings of his Providence, they serv'd Him, as they thought, in return with their Sacrifices and Offerings.

JUST as *Children*, when they have a Mind to gain your Favour will offer you some of their *Toys* and *Play-Things*; presuming, that you will be Pleased with what they are so fond of: So Men, under the same Presumption, and with the like Simplicity, have Offered unto God those things which contribute to the Use, Ornament and Pleasure of Human Life. But, can any Human Creature be so Stupid, as to Imagine, that his Gifts and Sacrifices are Serviceable to his Maker?

*Is there on Earth a Man, so much a Fool,
So Silly in Credulity; who thinks,
That fleshless Bones and the Fry'd Bile of Beasts,
Which were not Food even for a Hungry Dog,
Are*

The Folly and Mischief of Superstition.

21

Are Offerings, that the Gods delight to take?

SERM.

Are these the Honours they expect from Men?

II.

*And on Account of These will Favour shew,
Tho' Robbers, Pyrates, nay tho' Tyrants be
The Offerers?* —————

Yes, there are Men upon Earth, whole Nations of Men, and great Numbers in the *Wise* Nations, weak and silly enough to believe any thing: So that the grossest Absurdity in any Opinion or Custom, is no Argument, why it may not have been embraced by the Generality of Mankind. Besides; which is more foolish, to conceive of God, as in Human Form (which it is certain many have done) or conceiving Him in this Form, to conclude he must be liable to Human Wants: The Principle indeed is extremely absurd; but if that be once admitted, the Inference drawn from it is by no means unnatural.

AMONG the *Jews*, who were favoured with a Divine Revelation, one might have expected to find, if any where, juster Notions concerning God and Religion: But, that some even among Them, regarded the Offerings they were commanded to make, as upon some Account *advantageous* to God, seems highly probable, from the Cautions

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Pl. l. 7, &
seq.

and Remonstrances we frequently find their Prophets urging against this Error. Thus the Psalmist, *Hear O my People, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against thee, I am GOD even thy GOD. I will not reprove thee for thy Sacrifices, or thy Burnt-Offerings, to have been continually before Me. I will take no Bullock out of thy House, nor He-Goats out of thy Folds: For every Beast of the Forrest is Mine, and the Cattle upon a thousand Hills. I know all the Fowls of the Mountain: and the Wild-Beasts of the Field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: For the World is Mine, and the Fullness thereof. Will I eat the Flesh of Bulls, or drink the blood of Goats?*

Isa. i. 11.

——So also the Prophet *Isaiah*. *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices, saith the LORD? I am full of the Burnt-Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats.*——Now if it was found necessary to warn the *Jews*, that they could not profit the divine Being by their Gifts and Sacrifices, much more might others need the like Cautions, who had not the same Advantages for understanding the Nature and Perfections of GOD,

If

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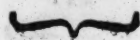
II.

IT can scarce be doubted however, but that in their Religious Offerings, Men proceeded upon different Sentiments and Principles. Some acted purely out of Complaisance to the prevailing Custom and Religion of their Country. And among the sincerely Devout, while some thought the Gifts were serviceable to their *Deity*, others, it is likely, regarded them only as Acknowledgments of their Subjection to him, with which they imagined he would be well pleased, though he could reap from them no real Benefit. Now, except where Offerings were expressly required and appointed by a Divine Revelation, How came they to think, that God would be pleased with such Acknowledgments? It would perhaps be difficult to assign any other Reason but this; They saw, that such Expressions of Respect and Submission, as are unprofitable and burdensome to the *Giver*, and of no Use at all to the *Receiver*; were sometimes grateful to Men, and therefore concluded they would be acceptable to God.

HAD all the *Mischief* been a little fruitless Expence, the *Harm* had been trifling; but this was by no means the worst; For being persuaded that God was profited, or pleased

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with their Offerings; many flattered themselves, that they might easily avert the Punishments of Heaven, and even purchase the Divine Favour, though they should commit the most flagitious Crimes. Observing that in *Human Courts—Offences gilded Hand could skive by Justice.*—And Conscious perhaps, that they in the like Case should be unable to resist such Solicitations; they judged it might not be impossible to bribe the Justice of Heaven, and engage the Divine Being to excuse their Wickedness. If they secretly broke through the most Sacred Obligations; If they defrauded a Neighbour, or slandered a Friend; If they were guilty of Adultery, Perjury or Murder, Man might be deceived: And, as to GOD, it was but presenting Him with a few Gifts and Sacrifices, and suffering Him to share in the Rewards of their Villainy; and He, they thought, would keep Silence and connive at their Crimes—Thus *Religion*, which is naturally calculated for restraining Vice, being corrupted by false Sentiments concerning the Deity, tended rather to promote and encourage it,

HAPPY for us, we are in no danger of falling into such idle and hurtful Errors,
But

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But let us not immediately conclude, we are clear of all Superstition ; for we may think God such a one as ourselves, in other respects as well as in this, and with as little Foundation. It is certain, much is said among us about *Serving* the Deity by our Adorations and Praises ; and, that none of us have a confused Notion, that we do Him some kind of real Service by these things, is not so manifest. When we talk, also, as we frequently do, of promoting his Glory, as of something very acceptable to him ; it is well, if we never suppose him fond of that Glory and Fame which is the Object of Human Ambition. These Expressions are capable indeed of a different Construction : By *Serving* God, we may only intend, obeying his Laws ; not for any Benefit arising to Him from our Obedience, but for the Advantage of Ourselves, and our fellow Creatures. And by *Glorifying Him* may be meant, spreading the Knowledge of his Being, Perfections and Providence in the World, purely out of regard to the Welfare of Mankind. But there is Reason to suspect, that all Men do not use these Words in such a Refined and Rational Sense : For it is common for those to make loud Professions

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fions of *Serving and Glorifying* GOD, who appear to have little or no Concern for the Happiness of Men.

IT were endless to mention every Instance wherein Mankind have thought the Deity such a one as themselves. For the most Part, Human Nature has been made the Standard of the Divine; only they have stretched the Standard a little, and sometimes indeed, but a very little: They have blended, some one Imperfection, and some another; and commonly each Man has included his own particular Foible, in his Idea of GOD. The Heathens, it is well known, ascribed to their *Gods*, almost whatever is to be met with in Human Life. They had their *Marriages*, their *Amours*, their *Births*, their *Feasts*, their *Jealousies*, their *Quarrels*, and *Wars*; EPICURUS, who placed the chief Happiness of Man in Indolence and sensual Pleasures; concluded that the Supreme Felicity of the *Gods* was of the same Kind. —We laugh at such Notions as absurd, and hardly wonder enough, at the Stupidity of those, that entertained them. And yet, I doubt, many Opinions with regard to Religion are current among us, no less absurd and ridi-

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ridiculous ; though we can boast of Superior Advantages for being better Informed. How many esteem the *Glory* of God to consist in those Things which are falsely admired in Men, as Great and Venerable ? In his being enthroned in Heaven, surrounded with numerous Guards ; Happy in the Enjoyment of Outward Splendor, and in the Applause and Ministrations of a worshipping World ! Now, What is This, but to measure God by an Earthly Prince, except only in respect of Power and Immortality ? Does Man delight in Pomp and Attendance ? Why then, to be sure, this makes a Part in the Divine Happiness ! Is Man gratified with Praise and Adulation ? God will be pleased with Fawning Addresses ! Can Man be Teized and overcome with long Importunity ? God may be wearied with repeated Solicitations. So easily do we pass in our own Imaginations, over the Unmeasurable Distance between the Creature and the Creator !

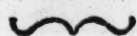
BESIDES, our Religion often takes no small Tincture, from our own peculiar Disposition, and is apt to vary, as that alters : To the *Morose*, the Duty is *Sullen* ; to the *Cruel*, *Severe* ; to the *Good-Humour'd*, so *Easy*, that

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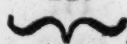
he will not punish any of his Creatures. Too commonly we persuade ourselves, that God loves those, whom we love; and hates any Nation, Sect, or Party, to which we have conceived a Dislike. But Men have ascribed to the Divine Being not only *Foibles*, but the worst *Passions* and *Vices* of Human Nature: They have represented him as *Arbitrary* and *Malicious*; subject to *Anger*, *Fury*, and *Revenge*: We speak without any Scruple of the WRATH of GOD; this Expression by frequent use is become familiar. And yet unless the Divine Being, may be *Hurt* or *Baffled* in his Designs, it is certain, he cannot be susceptible of any such Passion—— But do not the Scriptures countenance this Language? Do not they speak of God as *ANGRY with Sinners*, and executing *Vengeance* upon them? I Answer; That we have no way to vindicate the Honour of the Sacred Writings in this respect; but by supposing, they are not to be understood, in the *direct* and *literal* Sense. When they say God is *Angry with the Wicked*; the Meaning is, not that the Divine Mind is *Agitated* with *Passion*; but, that he is as much disposed to Punish them, as if he

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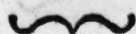
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he was in fact *Angry* towards them : Thus the Sacred Writers accommodated their Language to Human Capacities ; and speaking to Men of Divine Things, expressed themselves after the Manner of Men ; but unhappily, the Words they made use of in Condescension to human Weakness, have Confirmed some in the grossest Errors, through their own Imprudence, and want of Attention.

SOME have painted the Deity as of a Disposition (Charity obliges us to hope) much worse than their own : as prone to take, and revenge Affronts ; as envying Men the Enjoyment of harmless Pleasures ; and delighting to see them torment themselves with unprofitable Austerities. One might extract from the Writings of eminent Divines ; venerable Names, who in their *Day* were regarded by some as a Sort of *Oracles* in the affairs of Religion ; I say one might fairly collect from their Writings such a Character of THE EVER BLESSED GOD, as were bad enough for the most detestable Tyrant upon Earth——Do I *Feign* ?——Could I not *Name* them ?——I wish heartily I could not !——But, I want to expose not *Men*, but
their



their Pernicious *Opinions*. Have they not described Him Governing the World with mere *Arbitrary Humour*; Favourable to a *Few* for slight Causes, and Cruel to the *Rest*: Condemning the *Good* for *innocent Errors*, and accepting the *Wicked* for the *Soundness of their Faith*: Bestowing *Rewards* without any regard to Personal Merit; and Inflicting *Punishments* upon others besides those, who gave the *Offence*? They call Him, indeed, perfectly Righteous and Good; but then, when they would explain more particularly the Properties of His *Nature*; the Ends, and Measures, of His Government, They fail not to assign Him such *Qualities*, as are directly opposite to *Justice* and *Goodness*! Just as if in giving you a Man's Character I should tell you he was a very *Good* and *Righteous Man*; but that he was indeed *Partial, Arbitrary* and *Cruel*. What should you think of this? Would you not conclude; That, If I was in earnest, I must have strange *Ideas*, or none at all, of *Equity* and *Goodness*?

To say of some Persons, that they are as Bad as they believe the Divine Being is, would doubtless be a more Severe than Just Reflection upon them: One might apply to them

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them what was said to a certain *Heathen Poet*; to whom, as he was repeating a Hymn he had composed in Honour of one of their *Goddeses*; in which he had described her, as *Violent, Mad and Furious*; I wish, said one that was present, you had a *Daughter* of the same Temper with your *Goddes*. No one would choose to have a *Father* that was *Arbitrary* and *Capricious* in his treatment of his *Children*; that punished *some*, for the Faults of *others*; and without any Consideration of *Merit*, was fond of *One* and Abused the *rest*. But Men have ascribed without Scruple to the FATHER OF ALL, what is deemed Intollerable and Monstrous in an Earthly Parent.

THESE dishonourable Notions of GOD are of most pernicious Tendency. They at once corrupt and enslave the Minds of those, that entertain them. We all think we not only may, but ought to imitate the Object of our Worship. If then we conceive the Divine Being to be really and truly Just and Good, we may be induced by the Force of His Example, to become Just and Good ourselves: But if, on the other Hand, we ascribe to Him any Human *Vices* and *Passions*; such as *Malignity*,



lignity, Cruelty and Revengefulness, we shall be apt to Excuse, if not to Cherish them in ourselves, when they are recommended to us by so great a Sanction, as the Divine Example.

How Unsuitable, and Horrid soever the Object of Worship may be, Religion universally claims the highest Degree of Esteem and Reverence for Him; and this the Worshipper always thinks himself Obligated to furnish: Thus, if *Jupiter* is the Being to be Adored and Worshiped; though he be regarded as Mercenary, prone to Anger, Revenge and Lust; yet *Jupiter* with all his Enormities, must be loved and honoured Supremely; and the *Believer*, that indulges any contrary Sentiments will condemn himself as guilty of Impiety. Now, what shall he do in this Case? He is to Esteem and Honour *Jupiter*; But the Character of *Jupiter* is such, as honest uncorrupted Nature cannot but abhor: What Course then shall he take, in order to become sincerely Devout? Why, First, it is likely he will be cautious of enquiring too nicely into the Character of his *God*: He may be content, it may be, to admire him in the *Gross*, and Worship him in

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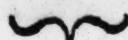
in the *Dark*, without Examining strictly into those Qualities of his, which he suspects would turn out to be *Odious* and *Ill*. At the same time he will be apt to check his natural Dislike to what he observes in him, that is *Wrong* and *Horrid*, esteeming this to be a Rebellion rising within him against that *Being*, whom he ought to *Honour*: He will, therefore, use his utmost Endeavours to warp his *Nature*, to pervert his Sense of *Right* and *Wrong*; and compel his reluctant Heart to approve the immoral object of his Worship. By the frequent Practice of these and the like Arts; no wonder if his Aversion to the evil Properties of his *God*, is insensibly weakened; and converted at last into a genuine, hearty and intire Admiration. And while he thus likes, and thoroughly approves an *Evil* and *Immoral Deity*, he is in a fair Way to admire and love whatever Evil Qualities are ascribed to him.

BUT suppose a Man's Temper is so good, that these superstitious Opinions cannot utterly spoil it; they will be apt, however, to create in his Mind no small Disturbance and Terror. If we are persuaded that God acts invariably by the known Rules of justice, pro-

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portioning his Complacency and Displeasure to the Merit and Guilt of his Creatures ; we may know what we are to Hope or Fear from him : In this case the good Man may reasonably comfort himself with the assurance of his Favour. But, if any one Believes, that the Divine Being is Arbitrary and Evil, though he be conscious of his own Integrity, he can have no Ground to look for any Favour at his Hands : He has no better prospect of Acceptance with God, than the most profligate Sinner. He stands, indeed, the same Chance with others ; But how dreadful is it to be left at absolute Uncertainty ; in an Affair, where the least Suspicion is grievously Tormenting ? Accordingly we find in the World, many Persons of undoubted Integrity, who are continually distressing themselves with strong Apprehensions of Divine Displeasure : They are troubled at that Presence, which ought to inspire every Good Man with Joy, both Living and Dying ; and tremble under the Expectation of that Judgment, which will finally crown them with Immortal Happiness. They are entire Strangers to that Elevation of Mind ; that Trust in Providence ; and those Enlivening

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vening Hopes, which are the usual Attendants of an Honest Heart and upright Life. Superstition utterly Blasts the natural Fruit of their Virtue, and makes them drag on a wretched Life in Melancholy and Despair. Much happier had it been for such Persons, if they had never conceived one Thought about GOD and Religion: Then they might have enjoyed the sweet Fruits of Innocence and Virtue, and not have had their Peace broken with groundless Terrors. But, now they live without Satisfaction, and die without Hope: Thus *what neither Disgrace, nor Poverty, nor Pain can do; that Superstition is able to effect; It can render the Lives of good Men extremely Miserable.*

It may appear from what has been said, how strangely prone Mankind are to think GOD such a one as themselves; and into what fatal Mistakes this way of thinking often betrays them: We should learn from hence, to be cautious what Sentiments we indulge concerning the Deity; especially to be cautious, that we don't admit into our *Idea* of Him, any of our own Imperfections or Vices. Superstition, unless we are watchful against it, may steal into our Minds insensibly,

under the semblance of Piety : It is not Confined to *this* or *that* particular *Sect* ; but insinuates itself *more* or *less* into most Men of all Religions and Persuasions in the World. It may prevail, not only among *Heathens*, *Mahometans*, *Jews* and *Papists* ; but — among *Protestants* also, and *Protestant-Dissenters*. It does not consist in calling God by this or the other *Name*, nor in worshiping him after such or such a Manner ; so much as in the unworthy Notions we may frame of his Character, and in the Affections and Passions which these Notions may produce in our Minds : When it gets deep Rooting in the Soul, it makes dismal Work ; and no disorder of the Mind is more obstinate and difficult to be cured.

IT concerns us therefore to guard against it with great Care :—Conceiving of God as the best and most perfect Being in the Universe ; who governs the World by the exactest Rules of Equity and Benevolence : Favouring the Good, and punishing the Bad, because they are such ; whatever they may be in other Respects ; as Immaterial, Self-sufficient, Obnoxious to no Want, capable of no Passion, and subject to none of the Humours, Foibles, or Vices which
are

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are incident to human Nature. But do not Men bear some Similitude to the Divine Being? Yes, they do: They resemble Him, but it is only in the more excellent Part of their Nature; in their Understanding and Reason; And even here the Resemblance is exceeding faint: For whereas human Wisdom is always attended with great mixtures of Folly and Ignorance; the Knowledge of God is Universal, and his Reason infallible: He constantly discerns all Things at once, Clearly and Fully. A good Man is still more like to the Deity. He resembles Him in the Divinest part of his Nature; in his Justice, Mercy and Benevolence, And yet Here also the Likeness is very Imperfect, as that of a *Spark* to the *Sun*; where the Disparity is so great, that all Proportion is lost between them; In a Word, GOD is infinitely *Wiser* than the *Wiseſt*, infinitely *Better* than the *Beſt* of Men.

Now, to ſuch a Being as this, How may we hope to Recommend ourſelves? Not by *Sacrifice* and *Oblations*; not by *Faſting* and *Prayer*; not by a *Noiſy* and *Oſtentatious Zeal* for the *Ceremonies* of *Religion*; not by any *Thing*, which any *wicked Man* can either

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Give or Do. But by the Gratitude and Devotion of a *Pure Mind* ; by Integrity of *Heart*, and Sanctity of *Manners*. We deceive ourselves if we Imagine, either that these things will *not*, or that any thing else will secure us an Interest in the Divine Favour. *He that offereth Praise, glorifieth God ; and to him that ordereth his Conversation aright, he will shew his SALVATION.*





S E R M O N III.

The Impossibility of concealing Sin.

Job xxxiv. 22.

*There is no Darknes, nor Shadow of
Death, where the Workers of Ini-
quity may hide themselves.*



SO many are restrained from Iniquity, not so much by a Sense of its Baseness, as by the Fear of Censure, and of the Punishments prepared for it by human Laws. The Eyes and Resentment of Mankind are the only Securities to their Honesty; and therefore, if at any time they could be assured of Concealment, they would abstain from no Crimes by which they could propose to them-

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Job xxiv.

13.

selves either Profit or Pleasure. Such are the Persons, whom Job describes, *They are of those that rebel against the Light; they know not the Ways thereof, nor abide in the Paths thereof. The murderer rising before the Light, killeth the Poor and Needy, and in the Night is as a Thief. The Eye also of the Adulterer, waiteth for the Twilight, saying no Eye shall see me; and disguiseth his Face. In the Dark they dig through Houses, which they had marked for themselves in the Day-time; they know not the Light. For the Morning is to them even as the Shadow of Death; if one know them, they are in the Terrors of the Shadow of Death.*

It is true they seldom find it an easy Matter to conceal their evil Actions, effectually from their Fellow-Creatures. Few Crimes are so artfully covered, but what in time are revealed; nor hid so deep, but what are afterwards disclosed to the Notice of Mankind. That which was spoken in Darkness, commonly is heard in the Light; and that, which was acted or whispered in Closets, proclaimed in Places of publick Concourse. Men are often observed by others, when they little suspect it: and, if they have any Companions
in

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III.

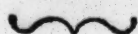
in their Crimes, they have Reason to fear, they may discover and accuse them ; for how can they depend on their faithfulness, to whose Dishonesty, they are conscious ? Their Interest, it is plain, often leads them to betray their Associates, and therefore can be no firm Tye upon their Secrecy. And if they have any remaining Sense of Honour and Conscience, it should naturally prompt them to expose the Partners of their Guilt, to the Shame and Punishment they deserve ; that by this Means they may make some Reparation to Mankind for their own Injustice.

BUT though no Mortal besides himself, was privy to a Man's Crimes, yet generally Wickedness leaves behind it some plain Footsteps, by following which Men trace out the Author. Amidst the Perplexity, which Guilt creates, he may forget to conceal some trifling Circumstance, or let fall some heedless Word, which may lead to a full Discovery of all. Nature may get the better of his Caution, and Truth slip from him, before he is aware. He cannot even Sleep in Security, lest in his Dreams he should publish, what in his wakeful Hours he with difficulty hides.

MANY

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MANY also have been so tormented, by the Furies of an evil Conscience, that in hopes of gaining some sort of Relief, they have voluntarily confessed their Crimes, when they were certain to bring upon themselves the severest Punishment. From all which it is evident, that what we commonly say of *Murder*, is true, also of other kinds of Wickedness; that they can seldom long escape the Notice of Mankind, when conducted with the greatest Art and Privacy.

IF therefore Men had no other Witnesses to fear besides their fellow Creatures, it would be somewhat dangerous however to venture upon Wickedness in hopes of Concealment. The Mask though contrived and managed ever so Artfully; may possibly be seen through, or may fall off, and leave them in the utmost confusion. Or should they *always* escape a Discovery, they must live in the perpetual Apprehension of it; and the Solicitude with which they guard against it, and the Fear lest one Time or other, it will be made, may render them much more miserable, than they would have been, had their Crimes been immediately detected and punished. Besides, every Man has a Witness within himself, that
justly

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justly claims from him a higher regard than all Men upon Earth ; a Witness whose Observation he has not the least possibility of Escaping. *There is no Darknefs nor Shadow of Death, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves from their own Minds.* Our Consciences for ever attend us, and narrowly watch our Conduct wherever we are, and whatever we do. These are Companions which we cannot shake off, and from whom we cannot conceal our Designs and Actions either by Day or Night, abroad or at home, in Company or Solitude. If we will not be restrained by their gentle Admonitions from engaging in Wickedness, they will afterwards punish us for it, by forcing us to suffer the most mortifying and painful of all Censures. And though we may for a Season Stifle or Slight their Rebukes, they will certainly find their Time to Speak, and to speak in such a Manner, as will constrain our Attention. If then we suffer them to observe us doing any thing mean : (and if we do it they must observe us) Though we have all possible Assurance that no Mortal shall ever know it ; though we so far deceive the World, as to preserve to the last an extraordinary

dinary Character for Sanctity and Goodness; Yet so long as our own Hearts are conscious to our Guilt, they will daily condemn us, and oblige us to undergo the severest of Punishments; for among all the Miseries of human Life, there is none more grievous, than that, of a Soul, which heartily despiseth and hateth itself.

HENCE that excellent and almost Divine Precept, *Reverence thyself*; that is, let thy own Mind be to thee instead of a thousand Spectators, and pay a sacred Regard to its Judgment concerning thee. Thus neither the opportunity of Solitude, nor of Darkness, will tempt Thee to be guilty of any mean Action; since in the most perfect Solitude and profound Darkness, thou still carriest a Spirit along with thee, whose Favour it highly concerns thee to secure, and from whom thou canst not possibly conceal any of thy Thoughts, Words or Actions.

BUT there is also another Witness, from which the workers of Iniquity can by no means be concealed. *There is no Darkness, nor Shadow of Death, where they may hide themselves* from the *Divine Being*. God is continually present with all the Works of his Hands,

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III.

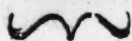
Hands, and conscious to whatever is done or designed in the Universe. The Spirit of the LORD fills the World, and can neither be excluded out of any Place, nor confined within any Limits. He passes through, actuates and supports the whole Frame of Nature. He is diffused through every part of his Creation; through Heaven and Earth, and Air and Sea; and through the boundless Expanse which lies beyond them. There is no Portion of Space, which is void of him, not the least thing he has made, which he does not essentially inhabit. His Substance, is within the Substance of every being, whether Material or immaterial, and as intimately present to it, as that being is to itself. He can neither retire from, nor enter into any Place, because he is always in every Place. The Attempt would be equally vain to fly from him, or to draw near him, for we are every moment involved in his being, and sustained by his Power. Were the Soul (as Mr. *Addison* expresses it) separate from the Body, and with one glance of Thought, should start beyond the bounds of the Creation; should She for Millions of Years continue her Progress through infinite Space with
the



*The language
here borrowed
from
Spect. No 455.*

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same Activity, she would still find herself within the Embrace of her Creator, and encompassed round with the Immensity of the GODHEAD. In short, where ever we are, he is incessantly with us, and in us, and every where about us.

Job xxiii.
8, 9, 10.

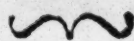
HE is not indeed the Object of our Sense, but, though always present with us, remains always invisible. *If we look forward we shall not find him there, or backward we shall not perceive him. On the left hand where he worketh we cannot behold him, he hideth himself on the Right Hand that we cannot see him.* Yet we ought not upon this account to doubt that he is ever with us, and constantly observes the Way we take. We cannot in like Manner see the *Wind*, when it acts on every Side of us, with great Force. We cannot see our own *Spirits*, which animate and move these material Frames. But as we conclude from its Works, that a human Soul is present; in the same manner we may infer the Omnipresence of God, from the Effects, he is always and everywhere producing. If we look upwards, the Heavens declare his Presence with them, by their splendid Appearance, constant Harmony and regular Motions. If we turn our Eyes upon the

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the Earth, we find him acting incessantly on the whole System of Matter, and working it up into an Endless Variety of Beautiful Forms; breathing Souls into numberless Animals; and filling all the Regions of Nature with Swarms of living Creatures. Every Tree, Plant and Flower, every Animal, and the minutest Insect proclaim a *present* DEITY, who wrought them out of the rude Mass of Matter, inspired their various Degrees of Life, and conducts them through their several Stages from their Birth to their Dissolution.

THE Divine Mind, therefore, is not merely present in the same manner, that Bodies are present, which are insensible of any thing about them; but he is vitally and consciously present with all his Works. Since he resides in every thing, he must perceive and know every thing. He cannot but be conscious of every Motion, that arises in the Material World, which he essentially pervades; and of every Thought that stirs in the Intellectual World, to every part of which he is intimately united. His Eye is equally upon us in Company or the deepest Retirement. He inspects our Midnight Haunts, as well as our Noon-day Conduct. He counts all our Steps;

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1 Sam.
xvi. 7.

Steps ; knows every Thought we conceive ; and sees the Silent Wishes and hidden Purposes of our Hearts ; as clearly as the most public Actions of our Lives. *He seeth not as Man seeth, for Man looketh on the outward Appearance, but the Lord looketh on the Heart itself.*

Pf. cxxxix.
1—12.

THE Psalmist has given us in the cxxxixth Psalm an excellent Representation of the infinite Presence and Knowledge of God ; in which one knows not what to admire most : the Justness of the Sentiments ; the Sublime Manner in which they are delivered, or the Fulness of the Description. Instead of saying *the Lord hath searched me* ; he gives it the more affecting form of *an Address to God*. O LORD, *thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising : thou understandest my Thought afar off. Thou compassest my Path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my Ways. For there is not a Word in my Tongue, but lo, O LORD thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine Hand upon me. Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from*

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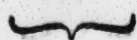
from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there: If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea, even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me; If I say surely the Darknefs shall cover me; even the Night shall be light about me. Yea the Darknefs hideth not from thee, but the Night shineth as the Day: the Darknefs and the Light are both alike to thee.

THUS it appears both from *Reason* and *Scripture*, that nothing can be hid from the Divine Mind. Let not therefore the Good Man distrust; nor the Wicked presume that God will overlook him amidst the Multiplicity of his Works. Say not Thou, I will hide myself from the LORD: shall any remember me from above? I shall not be remembered among so many People, for what is my Soul among such an infinite number of Creatures? Let not the Sinner, I say, encourage himself with such vain Thoughts, but be assured that the Infinite Spirit surveys all Persons and Things at once, without the least distraction or difficulty to himself. Man, it is true, may seem but an indifferent Being,

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when



when compared with the Immensity of Nature ; yet he is not overlooked by the Divine Being, who attends to the least and most inconsiderable things, as well as the greatest. Doth Man escape his Observation ? even a Sparrow doth not fall to the Ground unnoticed by him, but the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered.

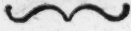
WE are so accustomed to our own Imperfections, that we can hardly forbear to mix them with our Conceptions of the Divine Nature ; and are ready to imagine, that what is impossible or difficult to us, may be also to that being, who is infinitely above us. But let us not think GOD such an one as ourselves ; unmindful of the vast difference there is between him and us. Man being confined to a small part of Space, cannot attend to many Objects at the same time ; but the Divine Mind, being infinitely diffused ; can observe at once an infinite number of Beings without the least perplexity. We may retire from Man, because he is present in One Place only ; we cannot retire from GOD, because he is equally, and constantly present in All Places. With regard to *Man*, we may be *alone* ; with regard to GOD, we are
always

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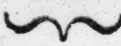
III.



always in Company. Could we rise to the height of Heaven, or sink into the Bowels of the Earth, the Spirit of God is there already. Could we dart ourselves with the Swiftneſs of Thought, through the Chambers of the Eaſt, or fly beyond the remotest Weſt, the Spirit of God is there already. Should we betake ourſelves to the moſt ſolitary Places, which were never frequented by human Feet, we ſhould ſtill be encompassed by the ſame Spirit, that ſurrounds us here; Should we enwrap ourſelves in the curtains of the Night; the Shade, which is impervious to mortal Eyes, is perfectly transparent to the divine Viſion. Walls and Darkneſs may cover our Guilt from the Viſion of Men; but no Darkneſs can ſhelter us from the Inſpection of God. No Walls can intercept his View. We may impoſe upon Men by a fair Appearance; but the Eye of God pierces through all the Veils and Doubles of Hypocriſy. Men look only at our outward Actions, and know even them but very imperfectly; but God is acquainted with our moſt Secret Conduct; ſees the Principles upon which we act, and the Deſires, which we ſtifle in our own Breasts.

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SINCE then we are ever involved in the Divine Presence, and ever observed by his All-seeing Eye; as to be unattentive to his Presence were gross Stupidity; so to disregard his Inspection, were absolute Madness. He is nearer to us and better acquainted with us, than any other Being can be. His Favour is more valuable, and his Displeasure more dreadful, than that of all other Beings in the Universe. He is not, therefore, a Witness to be despised; but worthy of greater Observance, than the most August Assembly upon Earth. Shall we reverence the Eyes and Opinions of Men, and be restrained from Wickedness by their Presence; and shall we not reverence the Observation of GOD? Shall we be ashamed of doing a mean Action before human Spectators, and shall we not blush at the very Thoughts of it, when we consider, that the Thought itself is noticed by the greatest and best of Beings? Shall we fear the resentment of Mankind, and the Evils threatened by human Laws; and shall we not regard the Displeasure of the Almighty, and the Punishments he will infallibly execute upon the Wicked? Let no man deceive himself; GOD is not an idle and
indifferent

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indifferent Spectator of Men, and their Actions, *He searches the Hearts and tries the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings. He is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, or look upon Iniquity*

SERM.

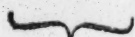
III.

Jerem.

xvii. 10.

Hab. i. 13.

without Abhorrence. No Crime is committed either in Publick or Private, but he sees it, he hates the Guilt, he sees, and the Guilt he hates, he will assuredly punish. The Sinner is no more able to escape the Effects of his Pleasure, than to conceal himself from his notice; and the very Consciousness, that he is obnoxious to the Justice of an omnipotent Being, who at all Times and in all Places, is intimately united with him, is sufficient of itself to make him miserable. What can be conceived more gloomy and wretched, than the Condition of a Man, that knows he has one for his Enemy, from whose Presence he cannot flee, from whose Knowledge he cannot be hid, and from whose Power all Nature can afford him no Protection? But suppose he remains insensible of the Divine Presence, yet GOD, who resides within him is able to disquiet his Soul, and vex it in all its faculties. He can hinder the greatest Comforts



from refreshing him, and convert them into occasions of Grief and Affliction. He can aggravate the Sorrows of his Life, and give an Edge to the slightest Calamities, that befall him. Every Circumstance of his present Lot is ordered by the Providence of God; Who can therefore make his Condition deplorable according to his Pleasure.

BUT the Time is coming, when they, that live, as without God in the World, shall be made sensible of his Presence in a dreadful manner, *when the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the holy Angels with him, all Nations shall be gathered before him; and every Work shall be brought unto Judgment, and every secret Thought.* The hidden things of Dishonesty shall then be revealed, and that Wickedness, laid open, which in this Life had escaped the Observation of Mankind. The Hypocrite, that had Triumphed secretly in his Craft, and thought himself happy in deceiving the World, shall then be detected with Shame; and his Guilt, which was always known to God, be exposed to the View of Angels and Men.

WHAT then remains? but that we behave continually as on a crowded Theatre; as in the
Sight

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Sight of Mortal and Immortal Beings; to some of which we are known already, and shall be to others hereafter. Let us be as far from doing any thing wrong and unjust when we have all possible Assurance of the deepest Secrecy, as when we act in the presence of a Croud. Let us reverence God; and the *Spirit* that is within us: and never esteem any Place to be dark and private enough for Injustice, wherein we cannot hide Ourselves, and our Crimes from these venerable Witnesses. Let us see to it, that our Conduct be honourable, whether Men observe it or not; and be careful not only, that our outward Actions, are unblamable, but also that our Hearts are upright, and our Intentions honest. Then will our own Consciences thoroughly approve us; then shall we have Confidence towards God, and Man; and instead of vainly wishing we could conceal ourselves from the Divine Being, we shall have Reason to rejoice in the Thought of his continual Presence and Inspection.



S E R M O N IV.

God the only OBJECT of our TRUST
and CONFIDENCE.



Pfalm cxviii. 8, 9.

*It is better to trust in the LORD, than
to put Confidence in Man; It is
better to trust in the LORD, than
to put Confidence in Princes.*



HE human Mind, conscious of
its own Weakness, naturally
looks out for somewhat to sup-
port and strengthen it. And
though it sometimes buildeth its hope on
other things, yet the two chief Rivals for its
Confidence are God and Man.

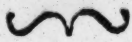
IF we compare together the Qualifications of these two Beings, we shall easily discern, which of them is most worthy of our Trust and Dependence. Indeed the Disparity between them is so evident and great, that it would be ridiculous to draw a formal Comparison; were it not for the unaccountable Folly of Mankind, who are ever preferring the Creature to the Creator; and trusting more to a deceitful Arm of Flesh, than to him, who is the Rock of Ages and who never fails.

LET it not, therefore, be objected, that it is needless to insist upon such Things, since every body will grant, that GOD deserves to be relied on rather than Man. What everybody may grant, I know not: But there is too much reason to fear, that few are steadily influenced by such a Persuasion. How many expect more from their Friends, than they do from their Maker? How many would esteem it of higher consequence, and take greater pains, to secure the Favour and Protection of an earthly Prince, than of him, who directs and governs the Universe?

YET it is certain, that Being deserves our highest Confidence, who is most able and willing to supply our Wants, defend us from
Danger

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Danger and make us happy. Now we have infinitely more reason to depend upon God, than upon Man, with respect both to his Disposition and Power to assist us. We may perhaps have some Friends, who are heartily concerned for our Welfare; and who, if their Ability reached as far as their Will, would leave us without nothing, that might add to our Happiness: But Friendship will pardon me; if I say, we cannot be equally assured of their Affection, as we may be of the Love and good Will of our heavenly Father. The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things. It often conceals Indifference, or Malice under an artful cloak of Sincerity and Zeal, which is penetrable to none but the All-seeing God. Wherefore it is next to impossible, we should ever attain to an absolute Certainty concerning the kind Dispositions of our most intimate Friend towards us.

BUT supposing their Affection for us is now as sincere as we could wish; what Security can we produce for the *Continuance* of it? The Revolutions, we see of Time and Age, frequently make considerable Alterations in the Tempers of Men, so that *now* they

they have no Regard for those, whom they SERM.
formerly esteemed. Their Interest, for ought IV.
we know, may at some Time or other suc-
cessfully invite them to forsake us, and
even to become our bitterest enemies. Nay
perhaps, they may cast us off, merely from
a Fickleness and Inconstancy of Humour;
of which no other account can be given, but
that being *Men*, they are liable to Change.

How precarious the Smiles of great Men
are, History will inform us; nor need we
go farther than the Histories of our own Na-
tion: Here we find, that many, who en-
joyed for a time the Royal Favour, were at
last made Victims; some to the Caprice,
others to the Interest of their Masters: But
what is worthy of remark is; how wise their
Misfortunes make them on a sudden; how
solemnly they warn us, not to rely on the
Favour of the great, the Uncertainty of
which they had found to their cost. * One
of them is represented, immediately upon
his fall, as thus exclaiming—

“ O Momentary Grace of mortal Men,

“ Which we more hunt for, than the Grace
of God !

“ Who

* *Cardinal Wolfey.*

SERM. " Who builds his hope on Air ; of their good

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" Looks,

" Lives like a drunken Sailor on a Mast,

" Ready with every Nod to tumble down

" Into the fatal Bowels of the Deep." —

* Another, when the Prince had deceived his Hopes, and consented to his Death, lifted up his Eyes to Heaven , smote upon his Breast and cried out with Astonishment; *" Put not your Trust in Princes, nor in the Sons of Men ; for in them there is no Salvation."* Had he discovered this a little sooner, as one would think he might easily have done by his own Reflection, it might possibly have prevented his being convinced of it by such woful Experience.

THE Friendship of Man is doubtful and precarious : But the Favour of GOD is unchangeable and certain towards those that faithfully serve and confide in him : He will not fail them in the time of their Distress, nor withhold his Aid and Protection from them ; He has given us repeated Assurances,

Pf. cxlv. 18.

Pf. lvii. 1.

(and he cannot lie) that *he will be near to all such as call upon Him ; And that they who put their Trust in him shall be safe under the*

shadow

* Earl of Strafford.

our Trust and Confidence.

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shadow of his Wings. Accordingly, no good Man, that sincerely relied on him, had ever

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any reason to be ashamed of his Confidence, or to cry out, like the Favourite, we have just Mentioned: *O Momentary Grace of God!* He makes our *Necessity* an Argument for our flying to him; which is often a reason, why our earthly Friends desire we should keep at a distance from them: His Goodness, which inclines him to succour and bless the upright, is unchangeable as his Nature, and not liable to be corrupted by Humour, Passion, or views of Interest.

AND, as the Goodness of God moves him to desire, so his Wisdom enables him to judge infallibly, what is best for us. The Ignorance and Folly of Man render him unworthy of an absolute Confidence. He may often mistake our true Interest, and do us a real Prejudice with the kindest Intentions. Our Friends are ignorant after what manner our Virtue and final Happiness will be affected by any good Offices, they can do us; upon which account they scarce know, when they are serving us; they have but a partial Knowledge of our Circumstances; and therefore, while they endeavour to free us from a
less

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less Evil, they may unawares involve us in some heavier Misfortune: They perceive not half of the secret Fears and Sorrows of our Hearts; which we perhaps care not to reveal, lest we should give them Pain by acquainting them with our Grievances.

BUT none of our Concerns are unknown to GOD: He understands our Circumstances, and the State of our Minds, not only better than our most intimate Friends, but also better than we ourselves. He observes every Affliction we feel; every anxious Fear, that oppresseth us; every Sigh that steals from us in private, to ease our own Minds; we may freely express before him our secret Sorrows; though we cannot *discover* them to him for he sees them already: And, as he is acquainted with all our Grievances, so he is never at a loss about the Means of removing them; and if he does not immediately deliver us, it is only out of regard to our Happiness at last. He knows (which is more than we do) what will be the consequence of every Blessing we enjoy; of every Pain we suffer; and how either of them will affect our Circumstances, our Life, our Temper, our Virtue, through Time and Eternity. Wherefore he never
gives

our Trust and Confidence.

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gives us *Evil*, mistaking it for *Good*; and this certainly should engage us to Confide in him, rather than in Men, who so often Choose imprudently, both for us and themselves.

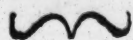
IN the next place; *It is better to trust in God than in Men*, because he is infinitely superior to them in *Power*, as well as in *Wisdom* and *Goodness*. In this respect we may say with the *Psalmist*, *Who in the Heaven can be compared unto the LORD?—Who among the Sons of the Mighty can be likened unto the LORD?*—As for Man, even the greatest of Men, he is a weak, impotent Being, so far from affording a firm Ground of Confidence to others, that he is insufficient for his own Support. In a variety of cases, it will be in vain for us to implore his Aid. We are subject to many Calamities, from which he can neither save nor deliver us; to many Wants, which he cannot supply; to many Anxieties of Heart, which he cannot remove, though he be ever so well disposed to assist us. In those Seasons of Distress, when we have the greatest need of Support, if we place our Trust in him, he will assuredly fail us. When our Soul is just

Pf. lxxxix.
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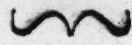
expecting her Separation from the Body, and trembling under the Apprehensions of that unknown State, upon which she is about to enter ; In vain should we fix our Eyes upon him, in vain should we stretch out our Hand towards him ; all he can do, alafs, is to pity our Agonies and pray for us ; hereby reminding us of that Being, who ought always to be the chief Object of our Hope and Dependence.

LET us therefore transfer our Confidence from Man to God ; from the impotent Creature to the Almighty Creator, who is able to do for us abundantly above all, that we can ask or think. Every part of Nature is entirely at his Command, and every Being in the Universe only an Instrument of fulfilling his Will. If, Truſting in him at all Times, we apply to him in our Diſtreſs, He will never put us off with an,—*I'm ſorry for you ; but I cannot help you.*—His Power is ſufficient to ſecure us from Evil, and ſatisfy all the Capacities of our Souls. He can defend us from all the Enemies and Dangers, we fear, and from ſuch as we do not apprehend or ſuſpect : He can either deliver us from any Affliction, or enable us to bear it with
Fortitude

our Trust and Confidence.

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Fortitude and Chearfulness: He can supply all our Wants both of Body and Mind. In the most gloomy situation, he can dart rays of Joy into the Soul, and enliven it with gleams of divine Consolation. If we are brought near to the Gates of Death, he can either lead us back from them, or inspire us with such a sense of his present favour and conduct; as will enable us to pass through the dark Valley with undaunted Constancy. In short, if we lean upon his almighty Arm, we shall find in it an infallible Support, a sure Defence in all possible circumstances of Life or Being.

OUR Friends may be separated from us; and upon that account may be incapable of assisting us. When Trouble is near all human Help may be at a distance. But God is always at hand, to uphold and defend us, a present help in every time of need. He is not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move and have our Being. We cannot be separated from our almighty Guardian, but are continually involved in his Being, and surrounded by his Power, wherever we go. It is equally impossible, that we should retire from him, or that he

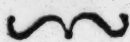
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should

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should withdraw himself from us. He is not, like Man confined to a Place, but fills with his Presence the Immensity of Nature, so that we can by no means wander from his Embraces.

BUT, was there no other difference between GOD and Man, while the one is subject to *Mortality*, the other of an *immortal unchangeable Nature*, this alone is sufficient to determine, which of them best deserves our Confidence. We are not secure of our most valuable Friends, no, not for a Moment. While we are pleasing ourselves with fond Expectations from them, and imprudently regarding them as our strongest Refuge, Death may instantly ravish them from us, and cut off their Life and our Hope together. But the God, in whom we ought to trust, for ever lives. His Being is not obnoxious to Corruption ; and shall never know either Period or Change. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, all human things decay and perish, but he shall endure eternally the same, and of his Years there shall be no End.

THUS upon a Comparison of these two Beings, we find on the one side, a composition of Inconstancy, Weakness, Ignorance and Mortality : On the other, a Being perfectly

our Trust and Confidence.

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fectly wise and good, almighty, and ever present with us, and not liable to any change of Place or Nature. Man therefore is destitute of all the Qualifications proper to create a full Confidence in him ; God is possessed of them all in the highest Perfection. He, who relies absolutely on Man, leans upon a broken Reed ; which, if it do not pierce, will certainly fail him. But he, who placeth his Trust in the most High, resteth upon a firm and immoveable Rock, where he may enjoy an undisturbed Serenity, and from whence he may look down securely upon the Storms of human Life, which rage below, but cannot molest or shake him.

If our Hope centers in Man, we shall be miserable of course ; For it is odds he either will not, or cannot afford us that Relief, which we expect from him. He may not really have so much regard for us as we fondly imagine ; or though he esteemeth us now, his Affection may alter. Death may arrest him, Want may invade him, Calamity may seize him : So that he, in whom we trust for Assistance, may stand in greater need of it himself. But supposing none of these things should happen, yet the probabi-

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lity of a Disappointment' with which we are threatened by so many Accidents, must fill our Minds with continual Jealousy and Fear.

ON the other hand ; He that is fixed in a steady Reliance on God, for the Blessings of Life, and for Deliverance from all the Difficulties that befall, or threaten him ; may from hence derive a joyful and constant Security, not liable to be disturbed by any anxious Doubts and Apprehensions. To use the words of a late excellent author. " The Man
" who always lives in this disposition of
" Mind, has not the same dark and melan-
" choly views of human Nature, as he who
" considers himself abstractedly from his Re-
" lation to the supreme Being. At the same
" time, that he reflects upon his own Weak-
" nefs and Imperfection, he comforts him-
" self with the Contemplation of these Di-
" vine Attributes, which are employed for
" his Safety and Welfare. He finds his
" Want of Foresight made up by the Om-
" niscience of him, who is his Support. He
" is not sensible of his own want of Strength,
" when he knows, that his Helper is al-
" mighty. In short, the Person, who has a
" firm

our Trust and Confidence.

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“ firm Trust in the supreme Being ; is powerful in his Power, wise by his Wisdom, and happy by his Happiness. He reaps the benefit of every Divine Attribute, and looseth his own Insufficiency in the Fullness of Infinite Perfection.”

WHATEVER Circumstances of Distress we conceive him in, his Trust in God will soften his Misfortunes, and inspire his Soul with Serenity and Comfort. Is he exercised with Poverty and Pain ? He regards them, as sent by his Heavenly Father to improve his Virtue, and compel him, as it were, to be happy, by engaging him to cast himself more entirely on the Divine Providence. He is persuaded, that God can remove them as soon as he pleases ; and, that he will continue them no longer than they will be for his Advantage. His Faith in God reconciles him to his Afflictions, by assuring him, they are intended for his Benefit ; and at the same time enables him to bear them manfully in confidence of an Almighty Aid. Conscious that his Succour is at hand, he exerts himself beyond his Abilities, and performs Wonders, that are not to be matched by one, who is not animated with

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this Persuasion. Assured that he is under the Protection of a present invisible Power, he is encouraged to do his utmost, and acts beyond what he could possibly have done had he not been inspired by such a Belief. Thus his Confidence in GOD naturally produceth Patience, Fortitude, Chearfulness, and all other Dispositions of Mind, that alleviate those Calamities, which we are not able to remove.

OR shall we consider him as present at the Death of a Friend? Upon such Occasions, they, whose chief Hope is in Man, being deprived of their best Support, sink down in disconsolate Grief: But he that has fixed upon the Eternal God for his Refuge, can say to himself; though I am deprived of one, who was dear to me, and with regard to whom I had perhaps indulged too high Expectations; yet I am not robbed of my principal Support; God, upon whom my greatest and best Hopes depend, remains with me still, and shall for ever remain. Why then should I indulge immoderate Sorrow? I cannot look upon myself as forlorn and destitute, as long as I have him for my Friend and Guardian. He can make up
to

our Trust and Confidence.

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up to me abundantly the Loss of earthly Friends ; which, the more I expect from them, the greater, I find, is my Anxiety, when their Lives are in danger, and the heavier my Grief, when Death takes them away from me. But it is otherwise with regard to my immortal Friend ; who, to my unspeakable Comfort, is always with me, and, cannot be separated from me by Accidents or Death.

LET us further suppose a Man, who is possessed of this steady Confidence in Almighty God, placed amidst the Desolations of War, observing the Distractions and Miseries, that attend it : His Reliance upon Heaven will, not only abate his concern about his own particular Interest ; but also relieve the Anxiety which every good Man is otherwise apt to feel, with relation to the Interest of his Country and of Mankind in general. Whatever Schemes the Tyrants of the Earth may form and execute ; whatever Convulsions shake the Civil World ; whatever seeming Disorders prevail in Society ; he never forgets, that there is a Sovereign Power, by which all Things are determined for the best ; and which will suffer nothing to come

SERM.

IV.


to pass, which is not right and good upon the whole. Sensible, that his own Understanding is too narrow to judge what is fittest and best amidst the endless Connexions of human Affairs; he joyfully submits it to the Counsels of infinite Wisdom; which, though before unknown, are discovered to him by the Issues of things. He calmly waits to see what Events Heaven will appoint; and, if they turn out contrary to his Wish, he esteems them better than what he had desired, since they come from God, from whence nothing comes, but what is perfectly right. He therefore receives with Complacency all things that happen to publick Societies, as well as to private Persons; considering them as the Dispensations of an infinitely wise and good Providence; whoever were made the Instruments in effecting them.

LASTLY, Let us attend the good Man, who trusts in God Almighty, to his last and most decisive Trial: Let us view him on the bed of Death, sensibly expecting the Article of Separation. In this critical Season, when every other Support fails; when all the Creatures own, there is no Help in them; God is the Object of his Confidence and the
Strength

Strength of his Heart. He knows, that after the Mortal Hour, he shall still be under the Conduct of the same wise, powerful and good Being, who has comforted him in his earthly Pilgrimage, and enabled him to bear up under the burden of Mortality: He, therefore, cheerfully resigns his Spirit into his Maker's Hands, assured that he, who has been his Refuge and Confidence in this Life, will be his Portion for ever.

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I shall conclude this Discourse, in the Words of the same Author I quoted above:
“ When the Soul is hovering in the last Moments of its Separation ; when it is just entering into another State of Existence, to converse with Scenes, and Objects, and Companions that are altogether new ; what can support her under such Tremblings of Thought ; such Fear, such Anxiety, such Apprehensions ; but the casting of all her Cares upon him, who first gave her Being ; who has conducted her through one Stage of it, and will be always with her, to guide and comfort her in her Progress through Eternity. *

S E R.



S E R M O N V.

The EXAMPLE of CHRIST.

I Pet. ii. 21.

For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his Steps.



If you consult the preceding Verses, you will find, that the Words I have read are addressed by the Apostle to those Servants, who had embraced the Christian Religion. He exhorts them to submit themselves with all due Reverence to their Masters; not only to such as were good and gentle, but also to those,

The Example of Christ.

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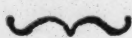
V.

those, who treated them ill, notwithstanding their Honesty and Faithfulness. He then suggests several Arguments, that might engage them to the Performance of this Duty; as the Merit and Glory there is in patiently suffering ill for doing well; and the Acceptance which such Virtue will meet with from the Divine Being. For this, says he, is

thankworthy, if a Man for Conscience toward God endure Grief, suffering wrongfully: For what Glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your Faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

ver. 20.

Then follow the words of my Text, the Sense of which may be thus expressed more at large. You ought not to think it strange, that you suffer for well Doing; for when the Gospel was offered to you, such, you were told, would be the Consequence of embracing it. You were forewarned, that, if you became the Disciples of Christ, you must deny yourselves, and take up your Cross; and, that, if you would live godly in Christ Jesus you must suffer Persecution. You ought therefore to look upon it, as one Part of the Profession, to which you are called, to endure Persecution



tion for Righteousness sake: Herein you only share the Lot of our great Lord and Master, who endured the worst Usage and most cruel Persecutions with admirable Patience and who endured them principally with this Intention, that by his Example you might be engaged to behave with the like Patience; under the hard Treatment you meet with from the World.

IN this Passage, it is plain, the Apostle urges the Example of Christ, as a Motive to one particular branch of Virtue, namely to the bearing of Injuries with Patience. But I shall take the liberty to consider it at present in a more general view; as it affords to Christians a powerful Argument to all the Duties of a good Life. I shall endeavour,

FIRST, to illustrate the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of the Divine Providence, in raising up such an Example, and proposing it to us for our Imitation. And,

SECONDLY; To represent the Obligations we are under to copy after it.

OF the two ways, by which Men are influenced to the Love and Practice of Goodness, Example is universally allowed to be much more powerful than *Precept*: For
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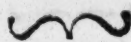
The Example of Christ.

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though by Precept we may learn what Virtue is, and acquire some faint Apprehensions of its Dignity ; yet, it is Example alone, that can affect our Hearts with such a thorough Sense of its Worth, as will engage us to pursue it with Diligence and Vigour. No verbal Instructions whatsoever, can excite in us such lively and affecting Ideas of Goodness, as we may gain by contemplating an excellent Character.

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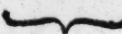
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BESIDES, when at any time we read or hear an admirable Description of Virtue, we may be tempted to consider it, as only a fine Romance, representing a Character, which never existed in human Life ; and which one might rather wish, than hope to attain : but our notions are corrected, when we find the Life and Actions of a good Man corresponding with the amiable Picture, and even exceeding it. Such Instances assure us beyond all Doubt, that the human Mind is capable of arriving at very great Perfection ; and that if we do not attain it ourselves, we must ascribe it only to our own Negligence.

EXAMPLE at once sets before us a Model, by which we are to proceed ; and works upon every Spring of Action within us : It
reproves

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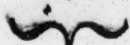
reproves our Sloth, fires our Emulation, quickens our Desire to excel, and inspires us with the lively Hope of Success. So great is the force of Example; and great in proportion is the Wisdom and Goodness of our Heavenly Father, in providing one for us, every way suited to our Nature and Circumstances. He has sent his Son into our World, to live and die as a Man, that while he instructed us by his divine Counsels and Precepts, he might also win us over to the Practice of Virtue by his own amiable and bright Example. The Divine Being might have communicated the Gospel to us in some such manner, as he delivered the Law of *Moses* to the Jews: Our Saviour might have come, arrayed in celestial Glory, and attended by an Host of Angels; and having declared to Men the Will of God, might have returned to his Father without engaging in this Scene of Mortality: Thus we may imagine the Dignity of his Appearance, would have struck Mankind with Awe, and procured a greater regard both to his Laws and Person: It is plain at least he would thus have escaped the Miseries entailed upon Flesh and Blood, and the heavy Sufferings, which
were

were inflicted on him by the Malice of his Enemies: But what, in our Apprehension had been better for him, had been much worse for us; for in this case we had lost all the Benefit of his great Example. Therefore it pleased God, that he should rather assume a Human Body, dwell with Men upon Earth, and suffer the Calamities of this mortal State: Of such great moment was it in the Divine Estimation, that we should not want a proper Guide, whose Footsteps we might follow in the Paths of Virtue to immortal Happiness.

It is true indeed, we might have derived, and still may reap no small Benefit from the Imitation of God and of Good Men: Yet each of these Examples are attended with certain Disadvantages. Almighty God is exalted so far above us, that it might carry some Appearance of Presumption, if, not content to adore him at a Distance, we should aspire to resemble him: The consideration, that though we should use our utmost Endeavours, and should for ever be making Advances towards him, we must for ever come infinitely short of his absolute Perfection, might discourage us in our Attempts to imitate his Character: He is not liable to those
Tryals,

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Tryals, to which the Virtue of Man is exposed in this State of Imperfection : He cannot be hurt or injured by any Being : Self-sufficient and immortal as he is, and free from all corporeal Mixture ; he can neither be tempted to Injustice by the Allurements of Pleasure, nor by the Prospect of Interest, nor by the fear of Indigence, Pain or Death. Mortals therefore, who are beset with so many Difficulties and Temptations, may think themselves excuseable, if they do not follow this transcendent Example. Besides, there are several human Virtues, which are not competent to the Divine Nature : Piety, for Instance, can have no place in the Sovereign Mind ; nor Gratitude in him, that has no Benefactor ; nor Patience and Fortitude, where there is no possibility of suffering the least Evil.

IN short, the immense Disparity between God and Us, is apt to diminish the Force of his Example upon us. Shall we then have recourse to the more familiar Examples of good Men ? These alas ! are all of them attended with Blemishes and Imperfections, which we shall be in Danger of imitating, if we take them for our Patterns :

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We may be as cautious as we please to select the best ; the best are not without their Failings ; and the more we admire them for their Excellencies, the more likely we are to be insensible of their Faults : Nay, sometimes our Eyes being dazzled with the Splendor of their good Qualities, we mistake their very Defects for Virtues ; and, as such, make them the Objects of our zealous Imitation.

THUS, though the Example of GOD may be highly improving, and those of good Men, beneficial to us ; yet neither of them are the best adapted to our Nature and Situation : We still wanted something further ; and what we wanted we have in JESUS CHRIST. His Example doth not appear so lofty as to damp our Endeavours ; nor is it so low, but we may follow it with safety : In him we have a Medium, as it were, between the *Divine* and *Human Nature* : As he was perfectly pure and righteous, he partook of the *Divine* ; as he was obnoxious to the Pains and Afflictions of Mortality, he partook of the *Human*. He resembled *Man*, but not in his Folly and Corruption ; He resembled *God*, but not in his Immunity from Sufferings and Death : He was

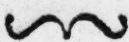
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exercised

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exercised with as severe Trials, as we can meet with, and prevailed against them. His Character contains the most lively Images of the Divine Perfections, together with all the Virtues that are peculiar to imperfect and mortal Beings. Adored be the Father of All, who has provided for us this excellent Pattern ! blessed be our Lord JESUS CHRIST, who willingly endured the Evils of Mortality, that he might at once animate and guide us in the Ways of Goodness by his powerful Example : What returns are due from us to GOD, and our SAVIOUR for this inestimable Benefit ? All, we can pay ; all, they expect from us, is ; that we accept the Favour which is offered us, by conforming ourselves to the Spirit and Life of our holy Redeemer.

THIS leads me to the *second* thing proposed ; Which was to represent the Obligation we are under to copy after the Example of Christ. And,

FIRST ; We should be engaged to this, by the *Amiableness* of it : which he who does not perceive, must either be unacquainted with his Life, or must have but little sense of *Moral Excellence*. shall not
here

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here attempt a large and particular Description of our Saviour's Character: This would detain us too long; and would perhaps be needless, to such as are versed in the Writings of the Evangelists; who by a minute Detail of Facts, related with that Simplicity, which is the Garb of Truth, have placed, as it were before our Eyes, a lively Picture of this excellent Person. Let it suffice at present, that we give a general Account of his Character, collected from the Histories, which they have left us, of his Life and Actions.

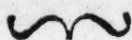
THE *first*, and that not the least Evidence we have of his Piety and Goodness, was his consenting to leave a State of exalted Happiness and Glory; and to undergo a tedious confinement in this Prison of Flesh, in order that he might accomplish the Will of God in the Salvation of Man. During his Stay upon Earth, his regard to the Deity appeared in frequent Instances of private Devotion; in a regular, but not superstitious observance of religious Solemnities; and above all, in a constant Obedience of the divine Laws; and a calm Resignation of himself to the Disposals of Heaven. Piety was never more severely

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tried,

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tried, than in his Instance, nor ever approved itself more firm and immoveable: Under the immediate Prospect of grievous Sufferings, it was the Language of his Heart; *Father, not my Will, but thine be done!* And, *he endured Death, even the Death of the Cross*, with a patient Submission to the divine Providence.

HIS Life appears to have been a continued Series of beneficent Actions. Being endowed with extraordinary Wisdom and Power, he devoted both to the Service of Mankind; with one healing the Disorders of their Bodies; and with the other, the Vices of their Minds. He went about suffering great Hardships and Fatigues, dispensing, wherever he came, heavenly Wisdom to the ignorant; Eyes to the blind; Feet to the lame; Health to the Sick, or Life to the dead! The whole of his Conduct and Discourse, seemed to be animated by these two great Principles, of Love to God, and Love to *Man*, which he recommended so often, and so earnestly to his followers, that, that which an excellent Author gives, as a brief Description of a perfect Life, may most justly be applied to him; "he passed on, from one Beneficent Action

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Action to another ; with a constant Regard to the Divine Being."

NUMBERLESS are the Instances, from which it appears, that he was a Person of the most tender and active Humanity : He even wept, we find, with his mourning Friends. His Ears were ever open to the Cry of the miserable ; and his Power was generously exerted for their Relief, from whom he could expect no Recompense for his Favours : The Poverty of a man's Condition was no Bar to his Kindness ; and he, who was higher than the Angels, and in whom it was great Condescension to become a Man, did not disdain the lowest Offices, by which he could do a real Service to the meanest Mortal.

THOUGH Mankind received his Favours with Ingratitude, he was not upon this Account the less diligent and zealous in promoting their Happiness : They treated him, though innocent, in the most contumelious and cruel Manner ; and returned him the worst Usage, for the greatest Benefits : Yet his Meekness remained invincible to the last, nor could they with all their Injuries provoke him to Resentment. Behold him suspended

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on the Cross, enduring the sharpest Evils, which Man has power to inflict! Observe his Enemies around him, not only withholding that Pity, which is due to the worst of Criminals, but exulting in his Misery, and abusing him with the most inhumane Taunts and Reproaches! Hear now, what return he makes to their Insolent Cruelty.—Does he imprecate the Vengeance of Heaven upon them?—Does he summon them to appear at the divine Tribunal?—No.—In the Agonies of Death, he implores the Mercy of God for his bitter Persecutors in the most affectionate manner: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

So just was he and inoffensive, that his Enemies, who wanted neither Craft nor Malice could not find the least Iniquity in his Conduct. Add to all this; his Contempt of earthly things, which he manifested by entirely neglecting the Pursuit of them: Satisfied with mean Accommodations, and solely intent upon discharging the Office to which God had appointed him, he looked with a noble Indifference upon the Pomp and Wealth and Pleasures of the World: His Mind was superior to the Calamities, as well

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as to the outward Enjoyments of Life: He felt them as a Man; but was undaunted at the Prospect of them, and endured them with admirable Constancy; He boldly attacked the favourite Superstitions and vices of the Age, though he knew he should thereby incur the Hatred and Persecutions of powerful Men; he chose to run all Hazards; but why do I say Hazards, when he foreknew the Event? He chose to suffer Death, in the most shocking Circumstances of Infamy and Pain, rather than to desert the Station assigned him by the divine Providence!

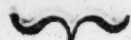
LET none entertain the less Veneration for his Character on account of his Sufferings, and the Meanness of his Appearance: for true Dignity lies, not in the Part we act, but in our acting well the Part allotted us, whatever it is: He came to recommend Humility and Contentment in a low Condition, and to teach us, that our Happiness doth not consist in Wealth and Grandeur: but such Instructions would have come with less Propriety from him, and would have lost much of their Influence upon us, if he himself had assumed that Pomp and Glory, which he taught us, we ought not to admire. His Sufferings,

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instead

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instead of debasing his character, were the means of making it the more illustrious : For though he had lived in Ease and Affluence, his Goodness might have been the same in itself, and in the Sight of God ; yet to Men it could not have appeared in so strong a Light, as when they see it proved with Distress and Affliction. Besides, in this case his Example must have been very defective, as it would have contained no Models of those Virtues which are most difficult to human Nature, and in which we have the greatest need of Aid and Encouragement. Where had been his Fortitude and Patience ? Where his Trust in God, and Resignation to Providence ? Where his generous Forgiveness of the worst Injuries ? It is true, he might have possessed these amiable Qualities ; ~~but~~ they must have lain concealed in his own Mind, and could never have been discernible to mortal Eyes, if they had not been called forth and exercised by Adversity : His Sufferings and Humiliation ought, therefore, not to lessen, but greatly to encrease our Veneration for him ; since they serve to illustrate his Virtue, and render his Example the more compleat and serviceable to us.

Now,

The Example of Christ.

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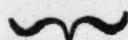
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Now, if we could meet with such a Character as this, in some Heathen Philosopher, it would deserve and claim our diligent Imitation, on account of its native Excellence and Worth: And certainly our Obligation to follow it is not the less, because he stands in a more immediate Relation towards us. The Example we are called to imitate, is the Example of him, who was sent from Heaven, that he might redeem us from the Bondage of Sin, that he might declare to us the Will of our Heavenly Father; and lead us in the Way to obtain his Favour and immortal Happiness. It is the Example of him, who loved us and gave himself for us; and endured all manner of Sufferings, in order to promote our eternal Welfare; of him, whose Disciples we boast ourselves, and to whom we professedly owe the highest Regard. These Considerations conspire to strengthen the Obligation we are under to tread in his Steps. Our Saviour's reasoning about one instance of Goodness may with equal justice be extended to others: *Ye call me, says he, Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am: If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your Feet; ye ought also to wash one anothers Feet: For I have given*
you

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you an Example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

IT will, therefore, become us frequently to consider, and ask our selves ; what would have been the Disposition and Conduct of Christ, if he had been in our Situation ; or how did he actually behave in similar Instances ? We should keep his Character always in View, as the Model to which we should adjust our own : Not that we are to act precisely as he did in all respects ; for that which is right in one Person, may be wrong in another, who has not the same Endowments. An Instance or two will explain my Meaning. Our Saviour associated himself with vicious Persons in order to reclaim them ; but if a Man of weak Virtue should affect to follow him in this, instead of reforming others, he would in all probability be corrupted himself. Our Saviour made it the Business of his Life, to instruct Mankind in Morality and Religion ; and if any Man had the same degrees of Knowledge and Wisdom, he could not apply them to a nobler purpose. But his Example will not justify such as want proper Abilities, in undertaking such an arduous Employment, and neglecting

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lecting the inferior Acts of Life, for which they are better qualified: It is not in those Duties, which vary with Men's Capacities; but in the Dispositions and Habits of Goodness, which are of universal Obligation; in Piety and Benevolence; in Gentleness and Mercy; in Humility, Patience, and Contempt of the World: These are the Instances, wherein we should all study to resemble our blessed Saviour.

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THUS it is, and not otherwise, that we can truly be the Disciples of Jesus Christ. Among the Philosophers it was sufficient to denominate a Man of this or the other Sect, if he only embraced a certain Scheme of *Speculative Notions*: And the Case is much the same with regard to the religious Sects, into which the World is now divided. But in Christianity it is not so. Whatever Men may call themselves, or be reputed by others, those alone merit the honourable Name of Christians, who in their Dispositions and Conduct, imitate the great Author and Head of our Profession. A man that is uncharitable and proud, may, it seems, be either a *Papist* or a *Protestant*; but a proud or uncharitable *Christian* is a Contradiction in terms,

SERM. terms; what never did, nor ever can exist.

V. *He that saith he abideth in CHRIST, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked: And, if any Man have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of his.* He may have been baptized in his Name: he may believe in him, and call him his Master and LORD: But if he is not like him, holy and just, merciful and forgiving, humble and patient; in the sense of Scripture he is no Disciple of his. He still wants what is most essential to that Character; for though Faith in Christ, and a Resemblance of him, must conspire to form a compleat Christian; yet he wants more of being one, that has Faith in him without his Temper; than he who hath his Temper, but is destitute of Faith.

HENCE, while of such, as profess the Christian Religion, there are great plenty, to be a thorough Christian is no very common Character: It is indeed the noblest of human Attainments, and had always been esteemed such; if those in general, who pretended to it, had behaved suitably to their high Profession, and carefully followed the Example of Christ. It were, therefore, the best way to revive the Glory of Christianity
(Would

The Example of Christ.

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(Would to God it was likely to take Effect) SERM.

I say, It were the surest way to revive the
Glory of Christianity; if they, who profess
it, would conform themselves to the amiable
Life of that excellent Person, whose Name
they assume. However, let each of us be
careful to do our Part towards restoring by
this means the Credit of our Religion. To
be as perfect as CHRIST, is not expected
from us! no more is required, than that we
unfeignedly do our best, and come as near as
we can to his blameless Pattern.

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By this Test we should prove ourselves;
and faithfully examine, whether, and how
far, we are true Disciples of JESUS CHRIST.
Do we sincerely endeavour to *follow his Steps*?
Is the *same Spirit* in us, that was also in him?
Are our Lives governed, in some good Mea-
sure, by the same Principles upon which he
acted? Are Love to GOD, and Love to *Man*,
the prevailing Dispositions of our Hearts?
When we meet with Calamities and Af-
flictions, we do calmly submit ourselves to
the Will of our Heavenly Father? Do we
employ our Abilities in serving our Genera-
tion, and promoting the Happiness of our
Fellow Creatures? Are we condescending
to

to our Inferiors, kind to the Distressed, mild and forgiving to those who injure us? When We suffer for doing well, do we bear it with Patience? Are our Minds superior to the World, and our Affections raised above its Pomp, Wealth and Pleasures? Should we adhere to our Duty, and continue to act the Part, for which God has designed us, though we should thereby expose ourselves to Hardships and Sufferings? — If, in imitation of our Saviour, we live and act under the Influence of such Dispositions, and are studying to attain them in greater Perfection, then are we indeed the Disciples of CHRIST; and may be comfortably assured, that when he shall appear, he will own us for his, and make us Partakers of that Happiness and Glory, which is prepared for all his faithful Followers.





S E R M O N VI.

THE *Reasonableness and Advantage*
of PUBLICK WORSHIP.



HEBREWS X. 25.

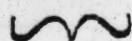
Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.



O enquire into the Ground, and Original of *publick Worship*, is both an entertaining and profitable Speculation : It is entertaining, as it may help us to account for a Practice, that has prevailed in all Ages and Nations of the world : And it is useful, as by
this

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this means we may learn how far, and for what Reasons we are obliged to comply with it.

AND First. There are some Principles in Human Nature, which powerfully incline Men to worship God in Society. Mankind in general, are so formed, as to feel great Pleasure in real Devotion. To reverence the King of Heaven and Earth; to adore his Wisdom and Goodness; gratefully to acknowledge the past, and to supplicate the future Care and Bounties of his Providence; are delightful Employments to every pious Mind. The Pleasures, which flow from these Exercises, are not inconsiderable, when they are enjoyed in private; but being shared with others, they become far more exalted and ravishing. It is then the devout Passions arise in us with the greatest Ardor, and are attended with the most exquisite Delight, even when we observe the expressions of them in the Words, Countenance and Gesture of those about us. Our own Devotion is kindled, or encreased by that of others, and the satisfaction we take in it, heightened by considering, that Numbers are partaking with us the same Entertainment. Upon these Accounts, we may venture to assert, that Mankind

Advantage of Publick Worship.

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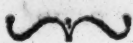
kind are naturally disposed to join together in Divine Worship; and, that supposing neither God, nor Man had made any Laws about it, it would have been no more extraordinary, if they had Assembled for *this* Purpose, than for the Enjoyment of any other Pleasures.

BUT in almost all Nations, Law-givers and Magistrates have encouraged this Propensity of Mankind to Religion. It was easily understood, that Piety was a main Support of Justice; and that the sense of a Supreme Power, the Inspector of Human Affairs, the Avenger of Wrong, and the Patron of Virtue, had a manifold tendency to strengthen the Bonds of Society; to restrain Men from *secret* Wickedness; to check the Insolence of the Great, and tame the wild Passions of the People. No wonder then, if in all well regulated Policies, the Publick should have interested itself about Religion, in which its Welfare is so nearly concerned. Temples were every where built; Rites and Ceremonies espoused; an Order of Men appointed to preside and officiate in sacred Things; and certain Days fixed, when the People should assemble for *Religious Purposes*.

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Indeed,

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Indeed, as to the Objects, and Manner of Worship, less Care, than ought to have been, was generally taken. The Magistrate was content to authorise the current Belief, though ever so absurd and ridiculous ; and to recommend those Gods and Ceremonies, which the People were best disposed to receive. It was thought sufficient, it seems, if, by publick and solemn Acts of Religion, a general Sense of some over-ruling Powers could be impressed and frequently renewed in the Minds of Men. Nor was this the only Advantage gained by instituting Religious Assemblies : The People by thus joining in one common Worship, were put in mind of their relation to the State, and to one another, which contributed not a little to strengthen their affection for the Publick, and to promote Amity, and good Correspondence among them.

BUT in some Nations this Practice, so highly beneficial to Mankind, was enjoined by an Authority superior to that of human Governors. God himself in the System of Laws he delivered to the *Jews*, by his Servant *Moses*, commanded them to sanctify every *seventh* Day ; abstaining from the common Business of Life, and employing themselves chiefly

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chiefly in devout Exercises. He also appointed other Festivals, when the People were to come together from all parts, and join in the Celebration of religious Exercises.

AND, in what concerns the Observation of the *Sabbath*, Christianity confirms the Mo-
saical Law: Our Saviour, whose Practice ought to be a rule to Christians, attended upon the publick Worship in the *Jewish* Synagogues: And the Apostles followed his Example, 'till they had gained a sufficient Number of Converts to Christianity, in one Place, to form a Church. Then they constituted regular Assemblies of Christians, and set apart proper Persons to instruct the People and assist them in their Devotions. We find also in the Writings of the Apostles, which are acknowledged to be of sacred Authority, frequent Exhortations to join in the publick Worship of God: As particularly in the Words, I have now read to you: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is.*

IN further discoursing upon this Subject, I would lay before you some Arguments to engage your constant Attendance on divine Worship in Publick. And,

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FIRST. Let me urge the Divine Command; which of itself will be an effectual Inducement with every *pious* Mind, to keep the Sabbath, and reverence the Sanctuary. Add to this: The Laws and Institutions of our Country; which next to the Authority of God, ought to be held in the highest Veneration. For, though, under our present happy Government, we are allowed to worship God according to our Consciences, yet we are not left to our own Choice, whether we will attend his Worship at all, or not. It is pity indeed, the useful Laws relating to this, are not more strictly executed, and that greater Care is not taken to punish the Violators of them. But an honest Man, and a Lover of his Country, will pay a sacred regard to the Injunctions of the Publick, even when he might transgress them with Impunity; and will not need to be awed into a Compliance by the Threatnings and Rods of the Magistrate.

DESPISE not therefore the joint Authority of God and *Man*, by neglecting to attend on the *public* Offices of Devotion. And if you consider how many, and what great Advantages arise from hence to Society; you will

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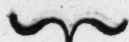
be in less danger of indulging yourself in such a criminal Negligence. Were *Piety* towards God utterly banished from the Earth ; it is a question, whether *Fidelity* and *Justice* would be able to stay long behind. It is certain, Wickedness might then go boldly to work whenever it could escape human Observation. Oaths would be insignificant : the mutual Confidence, between the *People* and their *Governors*, would be very much diminished, if Men were released from all Apprehensions of a SUPERIOR BEING, to whom they are accountable. Nay, I know not, whether, in that Case, a Man could safely trust his Friend, or a Guest be secure from those, that entertain him. Thus, if Religion were taken away ; human Life would be thrown into Confusion, and the Bonds of Society weakened, if not quite dissolved. And how is Religion to be maintained and cherished ? By what means, can a Sense of God, and Providence be more effectually propagated, and diffused among the generality of the People, than by their meeting together, at *stated* Times and joining in solemn Acts of Worship ? Our publick

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Assemblies,

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Assemblies, our Temples, our Ministers, though sometimes represented, as useless Burdens to the State, contribute more than any thing to keep Piety alive in the World, and to spread the Knowledge, both of *natural* and *revealed* Religion. Since then Society could not well subsist without Religion; nor a general Sense of Religion be maintained without the publick Worship of God, It is evidently the Part of every good Citizen to encourage it, as much as possible, by his Influence and Example.

WHEREFORE, if you absent yourself habitually from publick Worship, you cannot answer it to your Neighbour, to Mankind; to your Country. By such a Neglect, also, you but ill consult your own Advantage, and Pleasure: For nothing is at once more agreeable and improving to the Mind, than sincere and fervent Devotion. Do you desire to be made wiser and better?—Would you grow in that Virtue, which is the only Source of Peace in Life, Hope in Death, and Happiness for ever? The best Advice I can give is this; Go to Church, and attend on the publick Institutions

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Institutions of Religion, as often as Necessity and the great Duties of Life will permit you. Here, if you apply yourself with Sincerity and Diligence to the Solemnities of Devotion, you will find, that to worship God in the Assemblies of the People, is, by no means an unprofitable Employment.

WHILE you join heartily in adoring the most perfect and best of Beings, your own Mind will be insensibly wrought into a Likeness to that Character, which you admire and worship. To acknowledge him, as the universal Parent, will remind you of the near Relation you bear to Mankind, and strengthen the Principles of Humanity and Benevolence. By reviewing his Goodness to you, and to all Men, you will cherish in your Breast the noblest Sentiments of Love and Gratitude towards him: And when you pour out your Soul in fervent Prayers, you will improve in that Resignation to Providence and Trust in God, which will support you in Afflictions, and enable you to pass through Life and Death with Serenity and Chearfulness. The frequent Repetition of these Exercises will inspire you with such a sense of the divine Inspection and Presence, as

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will

The Reasonableness and

will be the surest guard to your Innocence and Virtue, at all times, and in all places.

THUS every part of Devotion is calculated to refine the Temper, and mend the Heart: And as it enobles, and exalts human Nature, so it demonstrates in the strongest manner its original Excellence and Dignity. The Capacities of which we are apt to boast, are in some measure common to us, and the brute Creation. In the inferior Animals, we may observe some Spark of Reason, though not so perfect as our own: they are also many of them led by the Instincts of Nature to herd and associate with one another. Wherefore, the Brutes are to a degree rational and social as well as Men: but they are all of them utterly incapable of Religion. This it seems was reserved to be the distinguishing Glory of Man; that he alone, of all earthly Beings, should be capable of knowing and worshiping the Sovereign Mind, in common with the Angels.

LET therefore the Usefulness and Dignity of Devotion, engage you to attend on its publick Offices. Besides, if you go to Church with a real Desire to be instructed, you may there improve in the best and most profitable Knowledge.

Advantage of Publick Worship.

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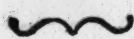
VI.

Knowledge. By hearing the Word of God read and preached, you may grow in that Wisdom, which leads to a good Behaviour in this World, and to everlasting Happiness in the world to come.—To this you may object, that you can read the Scriptures at home; and perhaps, you have conceived such high Thoughts of your own Wisdom; and such a mean Opinion of Pulpit-Instructions, that you despair of reaping much Benefit by them. Now, far be it from me, to call in question your Understanding and Knowledge. I will even suppose that with less opportunity, and leisure for Improvement, you are in fact much wiser than your *Ministers*: But then I assert, that this Circumstance is so far from justifying your absence from the Church, that it even affords a strong Argument against it.

For, though you are so happy as to need no Instruction, there are Multitudes of Mankind, who live in miserable Ignorance; concerning whom we may say, without Suspicion of Vanity, that they are not so wise as their Ministers. Out of pure Compassion for them, you ought to frequent those Ordinances, from which, it may be, you cannot expect to receive

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receive any Advantage yourself. Your Example will doubtless have a great Influence upon them, and powerfully entice them to cast themselves into the way of Instruction. They can hardly avoid making this, or the like Reflection—If, such a *knowing* Man, finds it worth his while to attend constantly on *publick* Worship; much more does it concern us to be there, who have so much greater room for Improvement.

AND indeed, after all our Complaints of the profaneness of the Age, it must still be confessed, that the Men of real Sense and Virtue, are not wanting in their Endeavours to keep Religion in Countenance. It has many Friends, of whom it need not be ashamed; and few Enemies, but what do it honour by despising it. I appeal to Experience — Do not the wise, the sober, the honest, the faithful in every place observe the Sabbath? And as to those who are seldom seen in any Religious Assemblies; who, I beseech you? and what are they? Are they not the very Dregs of all Conditions? In *high* Life; the vain, the empty and debauched? Among the *lower* sort, the lazy and profligate? Of all which, it is not easy to determine, whether Vice hath

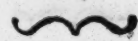
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hath made them *profane*, or *Profaneness* hath made them *vicious*. So true is this, that were you to go quite through the Nation, I am confident you would meet with few persons of real Integrity, and good Sense, that habitually neglect the publick Offices of Religion.

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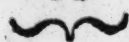
VI.



IT is therefore scandalous, as well as criminal to be a Stranger at the Church.—But perhaps the Services there performed are *dull* and *disagreeable* to you.—Now, though Devotion is in itself the most delightful Employment in the World; yet I acknowledge, there are some Things, that may render it unpleasant: As *First*. If your Mind is haunted by Superstition, it will fill your whole Life with Gloom and Terror; and especially the time which you spend in Devotion. Or if your Conscience labours with Guilt; you may well be uneasy, while your Thoughts are directly fixed upon the *all-seeing* and *righteous* Governor of the World. Or, *Lastly*. If you engage in religious Solemnities with Indifference and Coldness; no wonder you find them insipid and tedious. But, If you address yourself to the Worship of GOD, with a Mind free from Guilt, and Superstition;

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Superstition ; believing in him, as the just and benevolent Father of All ; if you also adore him with sincere and lively Affections ; your own Experience will convince you, that Devotion is attended with a noble and exquisite Pleasure. For never is the human Mind in a happier State ; never is it more thoroughly and sincerely pleased, than when employed in admiring what is great and beautiful : And where shall we find an Object more grand, than the almighty and eternal God ; the Author of all things, who continually actuates and governs that Immensity of Beings, we call the Universe ? Or, where shall we search for Excellence, but in him, who is the original unexhausted Source of whatever is good and valuable in the whole Creation ? Does the view of what is beautiful in a human Character inspire us with Delight ? And must there not result the highest Pleasure from contemplating the divine, which is perfectly and supremely amiable ? Is there not also a Satisfaction in being grateful ? In owning our obligations to a generous Benefactor ; in expressing our Delight in his Prosperity ; in celebrating his Merit, and depending with absolute Security on his Fa-

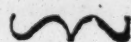
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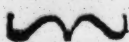


your and Protection? And must not the most exalted Pleasures arise from acknowledging the greatest Obligations to the most perfect Goodness? From contemplating the infinite Happiness of the Deity, and professing our grateful Sense of his Bounty and Providence? And then; what a firm Tranquility and solid Joy must it give, when we think of the Folly, Inconstancy and Viciousness of Mankind, and the Uncertainty of all external Enjoyments, to reflect upon ourselves, as ever encompassed by almighty Wisdom and Goodness; as ever under the Care of our best Friend, who, if we don't make ourselves unworthy of his Favour, will conduct us safe through the Wilderness of this World, to a State of perfect and eternal Happiness?

SUCH are the elevated Pleasures of Devotion. Nor can you enjoy them half so perfectly when alone, as in Company: For Society heightens every Delight! the Gratifications of our Senses, the Melody of Sounds, the fair Prospects of Nature, and the lower Pleasures of the Taste; none of them yield such a lively Satisfaction, when we enjoy them in Solitude, as when we share them
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with others. In like manner the Pleasures of Religion; though they are highly satisfying to one, that contemplates God, in Privacy and Retirement, yet they yield a much nobler Entertainment to him that joins with a worshipping Assembly.

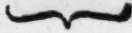
IT is the property of a sullen and unsocial Spirit, to affect a recluse and solitary Life, and avoid the places of publick Concourse.— A benevolent Man, on the contrary, delights to be present in the Assemblies of the People; and is pleased to see a number of his own Kind met together; especially, when they are met for such valuable ends, as the Worship of their common Creator, and the Improvement of their own Minds. And if their Devotion is not of the *false* and *gloomy*, but of the *free and affectionate* kind, he will there gather Joy from every Countenance around him. The whole Assembly, declaring by the Chearfulness of their looks, that they take delight in their sacred Employment, will reflect Pleasure upon one another, and mutually give and receive a most agreeable Satisfaction.

BESIDES, to join with our fellow Creatures in worshipping God is highly conducive

to

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to kindle or encrease our own Devotion: SERM.
For there is a kind of Contagion in human VI. 
Passions. Every motion of the Heart has a
certain Air peculiar to it; and, when we ob-
serve in others these visible Signs, the Affec-
tions, from which they proceed, naturally
arise within us. Devotion therefore will be
more warm, the divine Enthusiasm more sen-
sibly felt, and the Elevation given to the
Mind be greater, when, with a numerous
Assembly, full of a Sense of the Deity, and
his Providence, we engage in his Worship.
If here we catch not the sacred Passions, we
shall have reason to complain, not that Devo-
tion is dull and unpleasant, but that our
Minds are insensible and stupid.

UPON the whole then it appears; that as
we ought to attend on the publick worship
of GOD, out of regard to the Divine Com-
mand, and the Institutions, and Welfare of
civil Society; so this practice is highly con-
ducive to our own particular Benefit and
Pleasure. Hence we shall gradually be-
come wiser and better: enjoying at the same
time a sublime Satisfaction, far superior to
all the Delights of Sense; and even to the
nobler Pleasures of private Devotion.

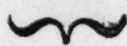
I SHALL only add, that devoutly to worship God in the Assemblies of the People has an immediate Tendency to fit us for the Employments and Pleasures of Heaven. No sooner shall the Soul have dropt this Body of Flesh, than all those Pleasures that depend wholly upon the Body, must vanish of course. Wherefore it is evident, the Happiness of a future State Consists in nothing but in *mental* Satisfactions : In the exercises of Virtue and Friendship ; in contemplating the wonderful Harmony of the immense Universe ; in admiring and praising the sovereign Mind, its Former and Preserver. Accordingly the Scripture represents the departed Spirits of good Men, as happy in the Worship, Love and Adoration of the supreme Being, whose Nature and Perfections they will then more thoroughly understand, than when their Minds were enclosed in this covering of Flesh. It is therefore of infinite concern, that, purifying our Souls from sensual Inclinations, and despising all mean and transitory Pleasures, we cultivate a Relish for the noble and eternal Enjoyments of the Mind, and particularly for those of Social Devotion. Thus, whenever it shall please God to re-
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move us out of this Life, we shall be duly qualified for joining with the celestial Choir of Angels and Saints, in celebrating his Praise, through the Ages of Eternity.—Which, that it may be the happy case of every one of us, GOD of his infinite Mercy grant, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

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VOL. I.

I

S E R M O N



S E R M O N VII.

THE ADVANTAGE and PLEASURE
of DOMESTICK LOVE.



PSALM cxxxiii. I.

*Behold how good and how pleasant it is,
for Brethren to dwell together in
Unity.*



HOUGH I am not Ignorant,
that the Word, *Brethren*, is often
used in a larger sense by the
sacred Writers, comprehending
sometimes a *Tribe* or *Nation*, sometimes the
visible Church of God; and sometimes the
whole *Race of Mankind*: Yet, in this place,
it seems to me, to be confined to such as are
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Members of *one Family*, and live in a *common Dwelling*. If we understand it in this limited Sense; these words of the *Psalmist* express a Sentiment, which is not more important in its Use, than beautiful on account of its Simplicity: *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren*; that is, for Persons of the same Family, *to dwell together in Unity and Peace*.

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IN discoursing upon this Subject, I shall endeavour to represent some of the Advantages and Pleasures, arising from an affectionate Agreement among Persons of the same Family. Afterwards, I shall offer a few Rules, the Observance of which may tend to establish and secure such an Agreement.

FIRST, We are to consider the Advantages and Pleasures, arising from an affectionate Agreement among Persons of the same Family.

AND we may observe in the *first* place, that by mutual Affection and good Offices, the outward Interest of All, and of each Individual, is most effectually promoted. This is obvious to common Sense, and scarce needs any Illustration: the Wants of a Family

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mily are then likely to be supplied in the best Manner, when the Members, each in his place, and according to the Power and Skill he possesseth, chearfully unite their Endeavours to relieve them. There are many Things necessary to the daily Uses of Life, and impossible to be conducted by the Prudence, or performed by the Strength of a single Person; which the consenting Heads and Hands of several may easily accomplish. Besides, the Talents of one are adapted to one kind of Work; of another to a different kind: And therefore every one, by applying himself to the Business for which he is qualified, may be subservient in that respect to all the rest of the little Community; while he in return is supplied by them with what he could not, or not so well, have procured for himself.

AND as the Sufficiency and Prosperity of a Family depend not a little upon its Union; so do also its Influence and Security. Neither this, nor any other Society, that is at Variance within itself, can firmly stand: If it is composed of Persons who act with Malice and Virulence against one another, it often falls of itself; and even in Proportion as its

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Members are only indifferent about each others Welfare, and withhold mutual Assistance, the more easily will it be overturned by evil Accidents, or the Assaults of its Enemies. By this means therefore it is weakened and rendered contemptible among its Neighbours. Whereas, if Relations continue affectionate and faithful to one another, though considered separately, they might be but little regarded, their Union makes them powerful, and is apt to procure them Honour and Respect.

FAMILY Dissentions are so *unnatural* and *shameful*, that your Acquaintance blush for you, when they observe them: Wherefore, if your House is haunted with the evil Spirit of Discord, your Friends will be tempted to forsake it. For what a disagreeable Entertainment must it be to your Friends, to be Witnesses of your *domestic* Quarrels, and hear your mutual Complaints? How must they be perplexed with respect to their own Behaviour towards you? If they side with no Party, they perhaps offend all; and if they favour one, they of course provoke the Displeasure of the rest. No wonder then, if they choote rather to disengage themselves

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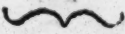
from a Friendship which is attended with such ungrateful Circumstances. On the other hand, Love and Harmony among Relations invite others to seek their Friendship, and do them good Offices: For Men will consider, that the whole Family will acknowledge and esteem themselves bound to repay whatever Kindness they shew to any of them; and thus having, as it were, many Sureties for the return of their Favours, they will bestow them with the greater Chearfulness and Confidence.

To a good natur'd Man there is scarcely on Earth a more agreeable Sight, than a Family which being uncorrupt in its Manners, and just towards all men, is knit together by the Bonds of Love; all its parts sympathizing with each other, and conspiring towards a common Good: Wherever we meet with such a Family, we cannot help being interested in its Fortunes; wishing, and at the same time pronouncing it happy. So forcible is the Charm of Union and Friendship; concerning the excellence of which, much has often been said, and with great justice. But it is matter of Surprise, that any, who think it worth their while to seek the Esteem
of

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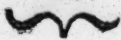


of others, should be indifferent about living even upon good terms with those of their own Family. Whatever be the cause of this, certain it is, the Friendships of the latter are commonly both easier to be gained, and of much greater importance to our Happiness.

FIRST. I say the Friendship of our Relations is generally *easier to be acquired*; for Nature, and the Condition of Life have begun it to our Hands, by recommending them to us, and us to them. Husband and Wife, from whom all other Kindred is derived, are joined by a voluntary Choice of each other, by the Exchange of a thousand Endearments, and by a strict Partnership in all divine and human Things: So that the Relation is calculated for producing the most perfect Friendship that can possibly be conceived. Parents again are united to their Children by a strong natural Affection; and Children to their Parents at first by a kind of Instinct, and afterwards by the firmest Ties of Gratitude. And there are many circumstances, which tend to conciliate a Regard for each other, among Children of the same Family: For it is of no small moment to have descended from *common* Ancestors, to have been

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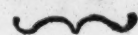
educated together ; to eat at the same Table ; to be associated in Business and Diversions, and to live familiarly in one Dwelling : Thus Nature has in a manner formed and adjusted the Bonds of Friendship between Relations, having left little more for them to do, than to preserve and strengthen those original Bonds : Whereas, before we can establish a thorough Friendship with others, we must wait long, and be at considerable Pains. Many times we are at a loss for Opportunities of expressing our Regard for them whose Friendship we desire ; but we can every Day, by some means or other, oblige and benefit those of our own Family.

AND as their Friendship is more easily secured, so it is of much greater importance to us than that of any other Persons : I mean, supposing them to be possessed of equally good Qualities ; for it is certain, Friendship can never subsist in any tolerable Perfection, but among the wise and good. If we value it for its Usefulness and Convenience, we shall hardly find any who are capable of being so useful to us, and in such a Variety of respects, as those who live and converse with us constantly. Others may do us a good
Office

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Office now and then, perhaps once in a Month; these may assist and oblige us many times in a Day. Who can be more serviceable to a Wife, than her Husband; to a Husband, than his Wife; to a Child, than its Parent; to a Parent, than his Child: to a Brother, than his Brether; when they live in one Family, and have a sincere Respect and Affection for each other? But such is the Imprudence of many; they make light of those solid Advantages, which Nature presents to their Hands; and wander from home in quest of uncertain and trifling Interest, which seldom answers to their Expectations.

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YET, if there was any thing more honourable and excellent in *foreign*, than in *domestick* Friendships; doubtless the former, though less advantageous, ought to be preferred. But this does not seem to be the case. On the other hand, when the Bonds of Esteem are added to those of Nature, the Union will then be the more admirable, as it will be the more entire and perfect. It is evident at least, that Discord and Quarrels are never more shameful, than among Relations; where, if even Indifference prevails, it always reflects Dishonour on one side or another.

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I DO not mean, however, that we should not cultivate Friendships with others ; but that while we cultivate these, we ought not to neglect, as of *small* Importance, the Affections of those of our own Family : Much less would I recommend that *narrow* and *contracted* Spirit, which confines its regard to its own Kindred ; excites Men to maintain an Union with them, that they may jointly overbear and abuse their Neighbours with the greater Security : Such Alliances and Friendships as these, are no less dishonest and criminal, than the Confederacies of Thieves, and their Fidelity in defending and assisting each other. Nor is Vice and Injustice ever beneficial to a Family, any more than to a single Person ; for however successful it may be in its Attempts, it leaves in their breasts a tormenting Sense of Guilt, and of ill Desert, both towards God and Man. Besides, they who have been concerned together in executing dishonourable Projects, can scarce entertain any hearty mutual Esteem, each of them will be apt rather to suspect and despise the rest, and hate them as privy to his own Shame and Dishonesty. From whence it is evident, that Virtue is
the

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the only solid Foundation of Friendship ;
either between persons of the same, or different Families. Let it therefore be observed,
once for all, that when I speak of *Union* among Relations that live together, I do not mean, a consent in carrying on mean Designs ; but an Agreement of Minds in exercising mutual Affection, and promoting the common good of the Family ; preserving at the same time the rights of Justice, Benevolence, Hospitality, and Charity towards all Mankind. Such a Union is highly useful and honourable, as we have shewn already ; and it is also the fruitful Source of many refined and exquisite Pleasures.

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HE who loves and is beloved by his Family, feels daily a thousand Joys, of which those can hardly have any Notion, who are unacquainted with Domestick Harmony and Friendship : For if the sight of a Friend is so grateful to the human Heart ; how happy is he who is perpetually surrounded with Friends in his own House ? If to converse with them we esteem, is attended with such extraordinary Delight ; what reason has he to rejoice in his condition, who every day meets and converses with those at his own
Fire-side,

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Fire-side, that are as dear to him as he is to himself? Nor let any one tell me that constant living together must needs occasion Satiety and Coldness: For whenever this happens between Relations, the Fault lies not in the Condition of living together, but in their own Manners and Conduct. Folly and ill-Humour will never fail to make persons weary of one another: On the contrary, Prudence, Virtue, genuine good Nature, and mutual Deference, will continually improve their Friendship; so that the longer and more intimate their Acquaintance has been, the more entire will their Affection be, and the greater Delight will they take in the Presence and Conversation of each other.

THE Circumstance of *living together*, is therefore, in itself, so far from hindering, that it naturally promotes the growth and Advancement of Love. A Friend that has been treated long with Freedom, will upon that very account be dearer to an ingenuous Mind: For nothing more powerfully inclines the Hearts of Men to mutual Respect and Tenderness, than the Remembrance of past Familiarities, and of the Pains and Pleasures they have shared together. Wherefore it

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Pleasures of Domestic Love.

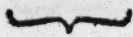
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is evident, that Friendship can never otherwise arrive at so great Perfection, as when it prevails among those of the same Family; who add, as it were, a fresh Seal and Confirmation to it, by every good Office, or kind Sentiment that is exchanged between them. Other Friends have sometimes much ado to be so absolutely certain of each others Esteem, as to leave no room for Suspicion and Jealousy: Besides, they are often separated for a long time by the Circumstances of Life: But those who are joined in one Family, may be infallibly assured of each others Affection; because they are well acquainted with their Manners, and have many Opportunities every Day of expressing their mutual Regard, by kind Words, Looks and Actions: And, as they are seldom asunder for any long Season, the Pleasures of their Friendship are the less liable to be interrupted by the Pains of Absence.

WHEN a Family is composed of Persons who thus love and sympathize with each other, they derive the most sensible Delight from every Occurrence of Life: If any of them meets with Success and good Fortune, his Joy is doubled and refined by saying to himself,

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himself, what Pleasure will this give to my Friends at Home? on occasions of Danger and Distress, he can comfort himself with this Reflection; but all this while my Relations and Family are safe. If he is perplexed with Cares, and tired with Business, it soothes his Mind and sweetens his Toils, when he considers that he is labouring for the good of his Family, whom he loves as himself, and whose Affection for him will be strengthened by what he endures for their sake. Being despised and undervalued by the world, he may bear it easily, when he can say; though I am unacceptable to others, yet I am assured of their Esteem, who are dear to me and know me best. My own Family will receive me with unfeigned Joy, and think themselves obliged to encrease their Kindness towards me, the more I am scorned and despised by others. I need not dissemble the Sorrow of my Heart to be agreeable to them; that very Sorrow helps to quicken their Affection. Such are the blessed Fruits of Unity and Friendship; of Friendship, I say, between those that dwell together: At the same time that it contributes to their Security, Power and Credit with respect to others; It also softens

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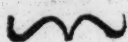
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softens their Cares, alleviates their Sorrows, and multiplies their Joys within themselves: Where this Affection is wanting, persons must live either in sullen Coldness and Negligence, in which Case all their Intercourse with each other will be perfectly insipid; or in the exercise of Malice and Enmity, which is still worse. You may easily imagine, what a melancholy and uncomfortable State a Family must be in, that is distracted with Jars and Contentions: how, while each are unconcerned about the rest, and pursue distinct or opposite Interests, all are unhappy; what a shame they are to their Friends; what a Diversion to their Enemies; how the Pleasures of Conversation are all lost amidst sharp Words, eager Upbraidings, and keen Reproaches; How weary they are of each other's Company; How glad to be eased of the Burden of it; in short, How their Minds are continually fretted, and their Lives embittered with mutual Dislike and Resentments——But I forbear to enlarge, the Subject is so ungrateful. Besides, from what has been said, it is abundantly evident, that the welfare of a Family depends not a little upon its friendly and affectionate Union.

If

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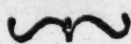
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IF then at any time you have a mind to know, whether Persons live happily together or not; consider not so much the Extent of their Possessions; the Buildings and Furniture of their Houses; or the usual Provisions of their Table. In all these things the Shew is more than the solid Enjoyment; and from them you can never determine with any certainty concerning their Condition. It is of much greater Importance to enquire; of what kind are their Manners? Are they honest and just, mild and prudent? Do they join in pursuing a common Good? How do they stand affected among themselves? Do they heartily esteem and love one another? Do they converse together with Pleasure? with chearful Looks and friendly Words? Do they exercise good Nature and mutual Forbearance; not prone to give, nor apt to take Offence? do they feel each others Joys and Grievs, and treat them as respectfully, when by themselves, as when others are present? In a word; do Innocence, Peace, and unaffected Friendship dwell among them? If so, Heaven approves, and wise Men will admire them; be not then afraid to pronounce them blessed, though they

they live in a Cottage and work for their bread : But if Discord and Strife, or even Coldness and Neglect prevail among them ; have a care, lest you think them happy ; though they abound in all the Enjoyments, that Wealth can procure.

THUS I have endeavoured to represent some of the Advantages and Pleasures, arising from an affectionate Agreement among Persons, that dwell together. If we are any of us the better for this Discourse, it must be in one or both of these respects ; either in going home more concerned to do what in us lies to preserve Harmony and Peace, in the several Families to which we belong ; or to promote, at least not to disturb, the Friendship of other Families : To perform the first, one would think, the Comfort of our own Lives might be a sufficient Inducement, were we destitute of all regard for those that live with us. And as to the *Second*, consider what a mischievous and devilish Practice it is, to destroy the Peace of a Family, and sow Dissention among Brethren by sly Insinuations, by accusing them falsely, or magnifying their Failings to one another. If to rob Men of their Money



and Goods be *villainous* and *base*, it is certainly more so to filch from them the Hearts and Affections of their Friends, which are far dearer to them, and of much greater Importance to their Happiness.





S E R M O N VIII.

THE ADVANTAGE and PLEASURE
of DOMESTICK LOVE.



PSALM cxxxiii. i.

*Behold how good and how pleasant it is,
for Brethren to dwell together in
Unity.*



HOUGH I am not ignorant,
that the word *Brethren* is often
used in a larger sense by the
sacred Writers, comprehending
sometimes a *Tribe* or *Nation*, sometimes the
visible Church of GOD, and sometimes the
whole *Race of Mankind*; Yet in this place,
it seems to me to be confined to such as are

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Members of *one Family*, and live in a *common Dwelling*. If we understand it in this limited Sense ; these words of the *Psalmist* express a Sentiment, which is not more important in its Use, than beautiful on account of its Simplicity: *Bekold how good and how pleasant it is, for Brethren ; that is, for Persons of the same Family, to dwell together in Unity and Peace.*

IN discoursing upon this Subject, I have endeavoured to represent some of the Advantages and Pleasures, arising from an affectionate Agreement among Persons of the same Family: And have shewn, that while it contributes to their Security, Power, and Credit with respect to others ; it also softens their Cares, alleviates their Sorrows, and multiplies their Joys within themselves.— I proceed now to offer to your Consideration a few Rules, the Observance of which may tend to establish and secure Harmony and good Order in Families.

AND I shall begin with that which is the grand Principle of Justice in all Societies, whether great or small. Let the *common Good* be pursued, and let every one be industrious to promote it according to his Ability:

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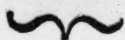
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Ability : Let the Advantage of the Family be consulted in the first place ; and preferred to that of any single Person separately from the rest : For, as in a *State* ; so also in a *Family*, it is unequal and wrong, that Affairs should be managed for the Benefit of a *part*, to the neglect of the *general* Interest.

BUT it is of great moment in what we place the *good* of a Family : For there be some, who imagine it consists wholly in Wealth and Grandeur ; an Opinion, which will be apt to lead them into Avarice and Injustice ; and the more so, the better they love their Families. But it is plain to every considerate mind, that no single person, nor consequently any Family can be happy, without Prudence, Piety and Virtue ; nor, you will say, without the outward Necessaries and Comforts of Life. I allow it, provided by *Necessaries* and *Comforts* you do not mean Pomp and Superfluities ; for how these things are necessary in order to live happily, I cannot understand. Wherefore, if any practise Dishonesty and Covetousness for the sake of their Relations, we may remind them, that by such courses they do their Families more harm than good. For, *first* ; The



Wealth and Grandeur, they procure them, will not make them happy. *Secondly*; Whatever they may gain for them by their Injustice, they lose the Respect and Confidence of their Neighbours, without which they cannot live in Security. And *Lastly*, which is worst of all; they are in danger of corrupting them by a vicious Example.

THE Happiness of a Family depends upon the good Sense, upright Manners, and mutual Friendship of those that compose it; joined with a Sufficiency of outward Things. Wherefore, let every Member study to be useful to the rest in these respects; Endeavouring to improve them by his Counsel and Example, and to supply their common Wants by his Diligence. Let each have his share, as of Enjoyment, so also of Care and Labour, according to his Abilities; for, if these things are unequally divided, they will be apt to envy and grudge one another. The Bees will look with an evil eye upon the Drones, as burdensome to them; and the idle will also dislike the diligent, when they perceive them to be uneasy upon their account: every one, therefore, should be concerned to contribute his proportion to the Support and

Advantage

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Advantage of the Family; applying himself diligently to those Affairs for which he is best qualified.

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LET those preside in general, who have the greatest share of Experience and Wisdom; and let all particular Affairs be under the management of such as understand them best, because this is evidently for the good of all. Let Friends be in common; that is, let those who esteem, and do favours to any of the Family, be valued by all: And let the same be observed with respect to injuries and Affronts. It is also of no small importance in order to preserve Unity and mutual Affection; that those, who are of one Family, should be of one Religion, and join together in the same Worship: For, if to partake daily at the same Table binds Men to each other; a Communion of sacred Things and divine Ordinances, must have a much more powerful influence this way; And whatever we are told by *speculative* Reasoners, any one, that observes the world, may see; that nothing is more apt to create Shyness and Division, both among Relations and other People, than Differences in Religion; insomuch that one is ready to pronounce them almost incom-

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patible with an entire and hearty Friendship. It were therefore desirable, that in one House, there should be but one Religion.

MOREOVER, that Brethren may dwell together in Unity and Friendship, it is necessary above all things, that they exercise mutual good Nature; that they be cautious of giving Offence, and unapt to resent each others Faults and Errors: Without this quality, it were impossible for such imperfect Creatures as we are to live together even with tolerable Comfort. Yet we may observe, that good Nature, however useful and amiable it may appear, is nevertheless capable of being carried to a criminal Excess: For as some men will do nothing to oblige those about them, and are not at all concerned, whether they are pleased or displeased; so there are others again, who are often betrayed into mean and foolish Actions, out of a desire to gratify the humours of others, and to make themselves acceptable to them: The *former* is rude and brutish, The *latter* weak and unmanly; wherefore, let both these Extremes be avoided. Let each be ready to sacrifice his own convenience to oblige another;

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ther; and to disoblige another when he cannot please him, by doing what is right and best for the Family.

LET no one advise another with Pride or Anger; nor think it below him to be advised in his turn: But let Counsel be given out of pure Kindness, and let it be received with Gratitude; since the advantage always lies on his Side, who is made wiser. If possible, let Passion never appear in Words or Behaviour; for it is always useless, often pernicious. It commonly begins or widens Dissention; nor can any Affair whatsoever be managed better with it, than it might be without it. It not only disturbs our Reason, and makes us incapable of acting wisely, but also many times weakens our influence upon those about us. Would you persuade a man to do, or not do something? You will generally find, that warm and passionate Language, is not half so effectual as calm and soft Expressions. By the latter, you gain his Consent without losing his Affection; but keen and virulent Words, exasperate his mind against you, and tempt him to reject your Counsel, though never so good and prudent, by way of revenge for the ill Nature
and

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and haughtiness, with which you gave it. Or, if you would make him sensible of a Fault, an affectionate and mild Admonition will be more likely to affect his heart, than angry and taunting Reproaches.

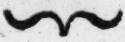
LET Passions, therefore, be banished the House, since they never do good in a Family, and are often the Occasions of Discords and Mischiefs.—And along with them we should also exclude Sullenness and Spleen. Our Friends naturally catch the Affections, which they observe in us. They are enlivened by our Joy, and dispirited when they see us overcast with Grief and Dejection: For the sake of our Families, therefore, we should study to be chearful. It were doubtless best, both for them and us, if we could banish Discontent wholly from our Hearts, and attain to an inward as well as an outward Serenity: But, if in spite of our endeavours spleen will sometimes return through ill Accidents, or an unhappy Constitution; it were laudable to conceal it from our Friends, to forbear useless Complaints; and to assume the appearance of Content, when we have it not in reality: A chearful person, unless he be remarkably faulty in other respects,

spects, is acceptable to all, and beloved in the Family to which he belongs. Upon these Accounts we should make it a rule to us in our domestick Behaviour, to endeavour after an habitual Chearfulness; we should at least take as much pains to avoid Moroseness, and to maintain good Humour, when we are at home, as when we converse abroad among our Acquaintance: Yet I do not mean by this to recommend a levity of temper, which transports to immoderate and wanton Mirth; but such a Serenity in our Words and Countenance, as may make it evident, we are satisfied with our Circumstances, and well disposed towards those about us. This, I say, is no less than a Debt we owe to them that live with us.

UPON the whole, a Family can never be truly happy, or firmly united, if Friendship be wanting; nor can Friendship subsist in any tolerable perfection, but among the wise and good; wherefore they, that live together, should be concerned to cherish mutual Esteem, by cultivating in themselves, and in one another, all worthy and useful qualities: Let them reverence each other, set a high value on their Approbation; endeavour

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your to secure it by a prudent and honourable Behaviour; and be careful not to forfeit their good Opinion, by being guilty of mean and foolish Actions: Let them study and practice the Arts, by which the Bonds of Friendship are formed and preserved; conversing chearfully with one another; treating them with steady Respect and Kindness; and sharing, in all their Joys and Sorrows. In a word; let them contribute what lies in their Power, to the Supply of their Wants, the content of their Lives, and the improvement of their Minds.

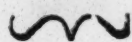
THESE are some of the principal Laws of domestick Life; which it may not be amiss to apply somewhat more particularly to the several Characters and Relations, of which Families are usually composed: They consist for the most part of Parents, and their Children. As to the former, let them exercise towards each other a sincere and faithful Friendship, as becomes those who have voluntarily entered into the strictest Partnership with respect to all the Enjoyments of life: Let them rule their house by joint Counsel, without Tyranny on the one hand, or Remissness on the other, aiming constantly at
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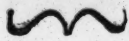


what is best for the Family; Let each direct those Affairs, in which their Understanding is superior, since it is evidently absurd and hurtful to all, that the wise should be led and governed by the ignorant: Let them unite their endeavours to educate their Offspring; being neither too anxious, nor yet negligent, in providing for their comfortable Subsistence; and principally solicitous to instruct them in useful Knowledge, and form their minds to Virtue and Religion: Let them govern their Children, not out of a love for Dominion, nor with a view merely to their own Pleasure and Convenience; but with pure affection, and for their Benefit over whom they rule: Let them be cautious, neither to break and sour their spirits with excessive Severity, nor to render them delicate and peevish by too much Indulgence; but pursuing the mean between these Extremes, let them endeavour to win their Confidence and Respect by an affectionate watchful Care over them.—

Lastly. They should be careful to inspire their Children betimes with a Love for each other: To this end they should discourage all spiteful Words and Actions; they should endeavour to make them sensible of the advantages

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vantages of Union, and the manifold evils arising from Dissention; and shew them how, upon account of their natural Relation and the circumstances of life, they are under peculiar obligations to mutual Friendship and Assistance: They should also treat them all upon equal terms; for nothing is more apt to create Discord and Jealousy among Children of the same Family, than the partial Behaviour of their Parents.

SUCH are the Duties of Parents between themselves, and toward their Children; the diligent performance of which will contribute not a little to maintain Harmony and Peace in their Families: For here, as well as in larger Societies, the condition of the whole mainly depends on the Behaviour of those that govern.—

IN the next place, I shall briefly recite the Laws which Children ought to observe towards their Parents; And, as while they are young they should obey them in all things, and commit themselves wholly to their Government; so they should always retain a high regard for their Counsel and Authority; mindful of the longer Experience they have had in the work, and the superior Wisdom they derive from thence in the
affairs

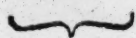
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affairs of life. Wherefore laying aside all obstinacy, and self-conceit; they should consult them in every important Concern, and not hastily act contrary to their Advice and Direction: Let them not be burdensome to their Parents through Sloth and Prodigality; but useful by their Diligence, and easy to be maintained on account of their Frugality and Moderation. Sensible of the numberless benefits they received from them in their Infancy and Education; let them study to make the best returns they are able; in all things preferring them to themselves; in Honour, in Ease, in Pleasure; assisting them, if they have opportunity, with their Fortune and personal Service; and sparing neither Labour nor Expence, rather than see them afflicted with the want of any thing. Let them honour such as are beloved by their Parents; and esteem themselves concerned in all the Injuries and Affronts they suffer. Let them speak modestly to them, and respectfully of them; bear with their Failings, and piously endeavour to excuse and conceal them. When life declines, they should be concerned to repay the Care they took of them in their Infancy, by attending and ministering



nistring to them with the like Diligence. Let them do all they can to keep them easy and contented ; Let them redouble their Observance of them ; appear to take pleasure in their Company ; and study to make them insensible of their growing Infirmities, by supplying them, to the utmost of their power, with whatever they want or wish for before they ask it. In short, let them chearfully comply with all their Desires ; except only, if they desire them to do what is wrong and foolish.

HAVING then considered the Duties of Parents between themselves, and towards their Children ; and also those that are owing from Children to their Parents ; It only remains, that we describe the obligations Children of the same Family are under, and the Rules they ought to observe with regard to each other. And as they are descended from common Parents, and spend their Youth familiarly together ; sharing in Business and Pleasures, and daily exchanging many kind Offices ; they should look upon themselves as plainly pointed out by Heaven to each other for mutual Friendship and Assistance. Human Life is little better than a tedious Warfare, in which we are exposed to the sudden

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sudden and unexpected insults of Fortune, and liable to be abused by the Malice of Men, working sometimes by open Violence, sometimes by a thousand evil arts of Treachery and Fraud. The divine Being, it should seem, knowing our Weakness, and the Dangers of the state, into which he was sending us, kindly provided a Guard for us. We are not left alone and destitute : We did not drop from the Clouds, or spring out of the Earth ; but are descended from Parents, and accompanied with brothers, or other relations, who are connected with us by the ties of Blood : Reason also contributes to our defence, enabling us to associate with others, and strengthen ourselves with Alliances and Friendships ; But certainly they are chargeable with great Folly, that wander abroad, industriously courting their Friendship, with whom originally they have no Connexion, and at the same time, neglect their Brothers and near Relations, as it were, knowing the recommendations of Nature, and scorning the Assistance which God has offered them.

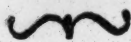
LET those who are sprung from common Parents, yield rather to the bias of Nature, and listen to her Dictates, for her Voice is the

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voice of GOD and Wisdom : Let them regard each other as formed for mutual Aid and Friendship ; and endeavour to preserve and strengthen their Affection, by all manner of good Offices. It is an excellent rule, useful in all cases, that in our treatment of others, we should imagine ourselves in their Situation, and them in ours : Thus a Master may easily find what is proper behaviour to his Servants, by considering with himself, what he might reasonably expect from his Servants, if their Characters were changed : and so likewise as to Parents and Children ; and in short all Relations whatsoever. But this rule has a peculiar propriety in the case of Brothers ; for here, there is no need of imagining a change of Characters at all, since both the Persons are naturally alike and equal : Wherefore a Man should behave to his Brother, as he thinks it reasonable his Brother should behave towards him.

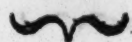
TRUE, may some one say ; but I am of a mild and moderate Temper ; whereas my Brother is sour and ill-natured : And therefore surely he does not deserve from me the same kind Treatment, which I may reasonably expect from him. Now, in the *first* place,

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It may not perhaps be true, that there is such a difference in your Dispositions; Self-Love often betrays us into false Judgments; especially, when we are comparing ourselves with others: It causeth us to lessen and depreciate their Virtues, and to enlarge and magnify our own good qualities: Here it often happens, that we confidently prefer ourselves to persons of much superior Merit! But granting, that your mind has not been biaſſed, and that you actually are as much better than your Brother, as you imagine; do you then make it appear by your Behaviour towards him, that you are the more excellent than he, and endeavour to subdue and melt his temper by kind and friendly Offices.

To sum up what remains in a few Words. Let Children of the same Family cultivate modest and fair Dispositions towards each other; be willing to contribute every one his proportion to the common advantage; and content to enjoy an equitable Share of what belongs to the Family: Let them prize the Affection of one another at a higher rate, than any of those little Advantages, about which men commonly differ: Let them promote each others Credit and Success; and look

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upon themselves as bound to assist them against all the Evils and Calamities of Life: Let them place their Interest and Security in their Union, and treat each other upon all occasions in a manner becoming Friends and Equals.

THUS I have finished what was proposed from the Words. In the former Discourse I endeavoured to represent the Advantages and Pleasures arising from an affectionate Agreement among Persons of the same Family: And in this I have delivered a short System of *domestick* Laws, which seemed principally conducive to maintain Harmony and good Order in Families: If there are any, who make small account of the Duties, I have been recommending; let me desire them to consider, what great stress is laid upon them in the sacred Writings: Saint Paul's Epistles abound in Exhortations to Unity and Love.

Rom. xii.
10.

2 Cor.
xiii. 11.

Col. iii. 12.

Be kindly affectioned, says he, one to another with Brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another. Be of one Mind, live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you. Put on Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, Forbearing and Forgiving one another. He also in several places gives particular Directions

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rections with regard to the Behaviour of Relations one to another. *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith and is worse than an Infidel. Let Children learn first to shew Piety at home and to requite their Parents; for that is good and acceptable before God. Let every one of you so love his Wife, even as himself; and the Wife see, that she reverence her Husband. Children, Obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy Father and Mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the Earth. And ye Fathers, provoke not your Children to Wrath, but bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord. Saint Paul then, it seems, regarded these things as of great Moment; for we find he has given thelike Precepts in almost all his Epistles.*

1 Tim.

v. 8.

1 Tim.

v. 4.

Eph. v. 33.

Eph. vi.

1. 2, 3, 4.

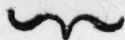
AND not without good reason; for it is by practising Virtue at home, that Men are formed and trained up to a right Behaviour in the world at large: So that he, who is good in the Family, stands fair to make a valuable Member in Civil Society. If a man be grateful to his Parents, he is likely to prove so towards all that do him good Offices:

L 3

If

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If he treat them with Respect and Submission, he will be prepared for paying the Honour and Obedience, that is due to Magistrates and lawful Superiours: If he exercise a fair and modest Temper towards his Equals and Inferiors in the Family, he will be apt to observe the rules of Equity and Justice in his Commerce with his fellow-Citizens: And if he be affectionate to his Brothers, and diligent in serving and obliging those of his own House; it is a strong presumption he will make a sincere and good Friend to other persons.

WHEREFORE let none despise these *homely, domestick* Virtues, which thus lead on to others, at the same time that they are laudable and worthy in their own nature: Though they have less in them of Glare and Ostentation, than some other Excellencies; yet they appear as truly beautiful to a judicious Eye. They do not arrogate Glory to themselves, nor vainly seek the applause of the World; but are content to shine in private; and, if ever they happen to be seen, their Modesty will scarce suffer them to receive our Praises: They are little celebrated by the selfish and ill-judging world; but they are approved by Heaven; and all, that feel their influence,
know

Pleasure of Domestick Love.

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know how to value them. Fortitude, Liberality and publick Spirit are doubtless noble qualifications, where they are true and real : but what goes by each of these names, I am afraid has often no small mixture in it of Ostentation and Vanity : But these mean Principles do not prevail so much within the walls and doors of our Houses ; where, if no Strangers are present, the ends and motives of our actions are not so ambiguous.——If therefore you would know a man's true and real temper, you must see him in his Family ; and see him, if possible day after day, without being seen by him : If here you constantly find him, good-natured, candid, modest, equitable, mild and affectionate, you may depend upon it, he is such in reality : But if he is haughty, passionate, surly and ill-tempered with his own Domesticks ; If at the same time he wears a specious appearance of Courtesy and good-Nature, when he is in company with others ; how shall we account for such opposite Humours ? Why plainly thus. His Behaviour in his own Family proceeds from pure Nature, and betrays the real Principles of his Heart, but when others are present, he assumes a Mask, *being ashamed to appear in his true Colours.*



S E R M O N IX.

MOTIVES to excite PARENTS to give
their CHILDREN a good EDUCATION.

PROVERBS xxii. 6.

*Train up a Child in the Way he should
go ; and when he is old, he will not
depart from it.*



IN Discourſing from theſe Words,
I propoſe to repreſent the impor-
tance of a good Education.—
And I ſhall conſider it ; *Fiſt*,
with regard to the Perſons educated. *Secondly*,
with regard to their *Parents*, in whoſe hands
it is commonly entrusted. And *Laſtly*, with
regard to *Society in general*.

AND *Fiſt*, If we conſider it in relation to
 thoſe, who are educated ; we ſhall find, it pro-
duceth

duceth unspeakable Advantages. For though Nature makes a considerable difference in the Understandings and Tempers of men, yet a much greater disparity ariseth from the different Measures that are used in their Education. Compare a Savage that is just come from his native Deserts, to almost any one, that has been brought up in a civilized Nation; and you will find the latter excels the former more than he himself does the brutal-Herd, though perhaps they were born with equal Capacities. Or, if in the same Nation, or even in the same Family, you compare those, that have enjoyed a good Education, with others, about whom little or no care has been taken to improve their Minds; the former in general, are so much finer and nobler Creatures, that they scarcely appear to be of the same Species.

It is true, an extraordinary Genius now and then makes a wonderful Proficiency, without any great advantages of Education; while some, that have been trained up in the best manner, turn out vile and contemptible wretches. But we rarely meet with such instances; and this is the reason why we admire them so much, when we happen to observe



serve them. Besides, there is little reason to doubt, but that he, who excels by the mere force of Nature alone, would have excelled in a much higher degree, had Nature been assisted by a proper Education. In like Manner such as become vicious, though in Youth their Minds were daily seasoned with good Instructions; might probably have been much worse without them.

As in *Agriculture*, it is requisite, that the Ground be fertile, the Husbandman skilful, and the Seed good; So in *Education*, Nature answers to the *Soil*; the Teacher, to the *Husbandman*; and the Instructions, that are administered, represent the *Seed*. All these advantages have generally concurred in producing and forming the most excellent and celebrated Men; and happy is the Man in a peculiar degree, on whom Heaven has bestowed them all. But it is a great mistake to imagine that an ordinary Temper may not, by a right Management, be cured in a good measure of its natural Defects. For as the best Genius may be spoiled by Negligence, so the worst may be corrected by the Application of a proper Discipline. Thus Carelessness is punished by Disappointment with regard to those

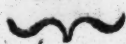
those Advantages which are easy to be gained; while Diligence is rewarded with Success in difficult affairs. SERM.
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NUMBERLESS are the instances, from which we may learn the absolute necessity and great force of Industry and Art. A good Soil will produce little that is useful, so long as it remains uncultivated; and the better it was in its own nature, the worse it becomes by the Husbandman's Neglect: On the other hand, Art and Labour often raise noble Fruits from indifferent Ground. What Vine or Fruit-tree, if no care be taken of it, does not become wild and barren, which, if it had been pruned and managed, as it ought, would amply have recompenced the pains of the Planter; the Horse, that, if I may use the expression, has been well-educated, quietly submits to the Rein, and obeys his Rider; but the Steed that was not broke at a proper season, usually continues headstrong and fierce. And why should we wonder at these things, when we often see the wildest animals rendered tame and tractable by skilful Management.

It was a low and familiar, but not upon that account a less instructive Example, which

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a great Man once made use of to this purpose. Lycurgus the Spartan Law-giver, trained up in a very different way two puppies of the same litter; so as to render one of them delicate and greedy, the other active and fond of hunting. And, when upon some occasion the people were assembled; Nothing, says he, O ye Lacedemonians, is of greater moment to the production of Virtue, than good Education and Discipline, as I shall now shew you by a plain Example. Then he produced his two dogs, and placing at once a hare and some meat before them; he turned them loose. Immediately they fell, one to his Food, the other to the pursuit of his Game. And when the Lacedemonians, not yet taking his meaning, desired him to explain it; These Dogs, said he, are come of the same Parents, but having been differently trained, the one, you see, is fond of his Belly, the other prefers following his Game. If then Education can make such a difference in Brute Creatures, it must certainly be of infinite moment with regard to Men, who are much more easily taught, and capable of much greater and nobler Improvements.

As

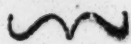
their Children a good Education.

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As to Science and Skill in the Arts of life, it is evident, these are seldom attained, and never to any great perfection, by the mere dint of Sagacity. Mankind in general do not invent, but learn them. They are mostly communicated and handed down from one to another, and few can boast of discoveries, in which they had no assistance from the Writings or Instructions of others. And as to moral dispositions and habits, they depend not a little on the Notions, that are infused into us in our early Years. At this season the Mind is soft and pliable. It easily takes any Impressions, and is capable of being wrought into almost any Form, by the Sentiments that are instilled into it, and the Examples that are offered to its notice. The Seeds both of Virtue and Vice lie concealed within it, either of which will shoot forth, or die away; just as they are cherished, or discouraged by those that converse with it. But such Principles, as under the influence of Education, get the start, and prevail in Youth, commonly predominate in after-life; insomuch that one, who is perfectly acquainted with the manner of their Education, may from thence account, in a great measure, for the

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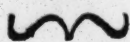
IX.



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the Faults and Virtues in most men's characters.



BUT Education, you will say, sometimes fails of obtaining its end: So does Medicine, so also does Husbandry, and almost every Art; but still they retain their Value, because in general they are highly useful, though they do not succeed, in every instance. We have this moreover to plead in favour of Education, that though some natures may be so perverse, that they cannot be wrought up by it to any great perfection; yet, had it not been for its influence upon them, they would probably have sunk into worse Depravity. Besides, it is no uncommon thing, to call that a good Education, which in some material points had been very defective. If a Man, for Instance, was brought up in a sober Family, if besides the common course of learning, he was taught the decencies of conversation and Behaviour, and carefully instructed in some Scheme of religious Principles; such an one, we say, had a good Education; and so far indeed is well enough, but notwithstanding all this, it might be exceeding faulty; his Spirit was perhaps broken in Youth by excessive Severity, or suffered

to

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to grow peevish and wanton by too much Indulgence: Or, it may be, he was forced upon some Employment, which neither suited his Genius nor Inclination. In short, we cannot determine, whether a Man has been educated well or not, unless we attend to the Chat of his Nurse, and to many other Circumstances, which are difficult to be observed; and which, however trivial they may seem in themselves, are of great weight in forming his Manners and determining his Character. In the mean time how unjust is it, to represent Education as of small effect upon account of those miscarriages, which in truth were owing originally to some Error in the management of it?

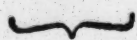
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BUT it is attested by almost universal Experience, that when a Man has either none or a bad Education, he is the wildest Animal upon the face of the Earth; but when he is blest with a good Genius and proper Cultivation, he becomes a most divine and excellent Creature. I shall not therefore scruple to pronounce, that a right Education is no less, and it cannot be more conducive to Virtue, than Virtue is to the Happiness of Life. As to outward Advantages, they are com-

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comparatively mean in themselves, and of uncertain continuance. Wealth is useful, but obnoxious to Fortune. The Instability of Fame detracts from its value. For a Man to be well descended is honourable, not so much to himself, as to his Ancestors. Health is desirable, but very precarious. Beauty excites Admiration, but soon decays. Human Strength, is inconsiderable at best, and subject to be impaired by Age and Sickness. Any of these may leave us before, and none of them can attend us beyond, the approaching Period of this earthly Being. Wisdom and Virtue, the noble Fruits of a good Education, are the only secure and immortal Possessions. These can neither be affected by Accidents, nor taken away by Force, nor blasted by Malice, nor withered by Time, nor impaired by Age. We may carry them with us through all the changes to which Mortality is exposed; and after they have made us happy in this Life, they will pass along with us through the valley of Death; and constitute our Glory and Happiness for ever. Education therefore extends its blessed Effects through the whole of our Existence, and begins that Felicity which can never come to an end.

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THUS I have shewn the Importance of a good Education, as it regards the *Persons* to whom it is applied. I proceed now,

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SECONDLY. To consider it with relation to their Parents, in whose hands the Care of it is commonly entrusted.

IN as many respects as Parents may be affected by the behaviour of their Children, upon so many accounts it concerns them to look well to their Education, upon which their Behaviour chiefly depends. Now as those are worse than Brutes, who do not desire the Welfare of their Children, as heartily as their own; so those must be stupid to the last degree, who can think it possible for them to be vicious and happy at the same time. Accordingly we find few or none, even among persons of indifferent Characters, who do not desire their Children should be good; and regret it as a sore Misfortune to themselves, if they prove otherwise. And in virtuous and sensible Spirits, these Affections are much stronger. To a mind, that is not void of Humanity, it must certainly afford unspeakable Pleasure to reflect, that it has been the Instrument of making any of its fellow Creatures virtuous and happy. For,

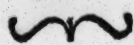
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if to have raised an Edifice, or formed a lifeless Statue, is matter of Satisfaction; what is it to have wrought a living Soul into its due Form, and assisted an immortal Spirit in attaining that perfection, of which its Maker has rendered it capable? Especially, when a man has done this for his own offspring, who are dearer to him than almost any thing in the world besides.

I BELIEVE indeed it is impossible to imagine a more lively Joy than that which dilates the Heart of an affectionate Parent, when he attends to the laudable Conduct of his own Children; and this Joy is doubled upon him, when he considers it as the reward of Heaven, for the Pains and Expence he had bestowed upon them in their Education. How must he be delighted, to observe them walking in the ways of Integrity and Virtue; respecting his own Friends and being respected by them; and growing in Favour daily with God and Man? What Satisfaction must it yield him under a sense of his Mortality, to be comfortably assured, that they who are to inherit his Name and Fortune, will not abuse the one, nor disgrace the other by Wickedness and Folly: And to see them so
nue

their Children a good Education.

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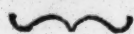
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well confirmed in habits of Virtue, that he has good reason to hope, they would continue to behave well, though it should please God to deprive them of the benefit of his own Care and Counsel? The tender emotions of Joy such happy Parents feel, I believe, they themselves would find it a hard task fully to describe.

NOR is it easy to represent on the other hand, the anguish of a Parent's Heart, pierced with the miscarriages of a Son or a Daughter. But we may form some Notion how heavy this Grief lies upon the Mind, from the miserable Effects it often produceth. For upon this account some have worn out a wretched life in continual Dejection; some have laid violent hands upon themselves; and others have been bowed to the Grave by the very weight of their Sorrows. Nor can any just thought remove these Afflictions; unless by having used a proper Care in educating their Children, they had done all that lay in their Power to prevent their Misfortunes: If they are conscious they have been guilty of any Negligence, with regard to them, they must be stung with the sharpest Remorse.

M 2

UPON



UPON the manner in which a Parent brings up his Children it mostly depends, whether they shall be Scourges or Blessings to himself, when they are grown to maturity. By seasoning their youthful minds with the principles of Generosity and Gratitude, he will dispose them to repay the obligations he has laid upon them, by attending and ministering to him with Care and Chearfulness in the decline of his life. But if he trains them up in the maxims of Avarice, they will be apt to regard him as an encumbrance upon their hands, and a bar to their happiness, as soon as he becomes useless to their Fortunes. If he indulges them when young in Sloth and Prodigality, they will perhaps proceed to such a degree of Extravagance, as he may neither be willing nor able to support. It is therefore surprising to observe the stupid negligence of some Parents with regard to their Children: They suffer them to contract a fondness for brutal Pleasures, and take no pains to inspire them with a love of Frugality and Temperance. When such Children arrive at the Age of Manhood (for they seldom reach the Years of Discretion) they despise a regular and sober life,
and

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and plunge into gross and abominable Sensuality. Then, when the Parent sees and feels the bad Consequence of it, he begins to repent too late of his own Negligence.—

What it would be extremely barbarous to say to him in such a Circumstance, may yet be a seasonable warning to others; that by due and timely Care in educating his Children, he might probably have prevented their Wick- edness, which is not now in his power to cor- rect.

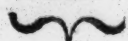
WHAT has been said, may suffice to shew the importance of Education, both to *Chil- dren* and their *Parents*. It remains,

LASTLY, that we consider it with regard to *Society in general*.

YOUTH is the Nursery, out of which So- ciety must daily be supplied with new Mem- bers, to fill up the places of those that die. And since the Conduct of men depends prin- cipally upon their Education, and the Wel- fare of a State, upon the Manners and Con- duct of those that compose it; It is plain the Condition of any Society must become in a short time better or worse, in proportion as its Youth are educated well or ill. Hence in some of the wisest Nations, Parents have

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not been suffered to train up their Children according to their own Fancy ; but in a certain method prescribed by the Law, from which they might not depart without being liable to a severe Penalty. And, indeed it was highly reasonable, the State should take some Cognizance of an affair, in which its Interest is so nearly concerned. Thus in *Sparta* the publick directed and provided for the Education of Children ; and he that refused to go through the established Forms, was thought unworthy to be a Member of the Commonwealth, and excluded from all the Privileges of a Citizen.

THE *Persians* also did not leave it wholly to the discretion of Parents in what manner their Children should be educated. But whereas in other Nations, it was thought sufficient, that Murder, Theft, Adultery and the like, should be forbidden by the Laws, and punished, when committed ; among them care was taken to prevent such Crimes, by training up their Youth in such manner, as that they should have no inclination to Injustice or Wickedness. Schools and Masters were appointed by the publick Authority, which the Youth were obliged to attend.

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Here they were taught, not, as with us, only to know their Letters; but to love Justice and Temperance, to obey the Laws of their Country, and be grateful to their Benefactors, to GOD, their Parents and Friends.

AND though in our Nation, the care of Youth is left wholly to their Parents, yet every man ought to look upon himself as answerable to Mankind around him, for the manner in which he brings up his Children. A good Education is a Debt he owes, not only to his Offspring, but also to that Society, to which he is indebted for all that is dear to him, and for which he ought to entertain a most sacred regard. He cannot justly boast, that he has done service to the world by raising up Children, and barely encreasing the number of Men; for, if by neglecting their Education, he turns them out vicious and dissolute, it had been better for Society they had never been born. But he, who, having raised a Family of Children, forms them by his Care and Instructions to the love and practice of Piety, Justice, Humanity, Industry and Temperance, and thus qualifies them to fill up some Stations in life usefully and well; such a Man performs an important Service to the

M 4 World,

SERM. World, and upon this account deserves well
IX. from human Society.

THUS in whatever light we consider Education, whether, as it regards the Persons educated, or their Parents, or Society in general; in each of these respects, we find it to be an affair of the last Consequence. These Reflections demand principally the attention of Parents; and from what has been said, we may take occasion to exhort them, that they use their utmost Industry and Prudence in educating their Children. Would you consult their Welfare? This is the most effectual way of promoting it. Do you desire to have Comfort and Satisfaction in them? You have little reason to hope for it, if you neglect their Education. Would you see them useful, beloved, and respected in the world, when they are grown up? All depends on the Care you bestow upon them at present. Lose, therefore, no time, but take them, while their Minds are yet tender and susceptible of good Impressions. Spare not your own pains; seize every opportunity that presents itself, of instilling into them some just Sentiments; and let it be the business and pleasure of your vacant Hours, to assist
the

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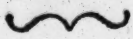
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the dawn of Reason, and instruct them in the rules of Prudence and Virtue. Grudge not any expence your circumstances will allow to procure them the best Instructions; For if you should take something from their Fortunes to improve the advantages of their Education; perhaps neither you nor they will ever have reason to repent of it.

BUT many are so ambitious to leave their Children rich and great, that they can spare nothing towards their Education. One of this Character once came to a wise Man, and desired to know, for how much he would undertake to instruct his Son? The other fixed his price, which the careful Father thought extravagant; complaining, that with so much he could buy a Slave. Do so then, replied the other, by all means, and you will have *two* Slaves, the *Slave* your *Son*, and the *Slave* you purchase. Strange that men's reason should be so far blinded by Avarice and Vanity, as to imagine, it possible for their Children to be happy, if they are rich; while at the same time they are brutish, ignorant, and vicious. I grant you ought to consider the Circumstances of your Family; but if you lay out less upon their Bodies, it will perhaps be no worse

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worse for them, and you will have more to spend in improving their Minds. And though by this means their Fortunes should be somewhat diminished, yet they will be better qualified to use and improve the Remainder; So that, in this case, that paradoxical Saying of an old Sage is most certainly true, that *one half* is more, that is, better than the *whole*. As to yourself it will be far more honourable to your Name, that it should be said you were the Father of an excellent Man, than that you left your Son in the possession of great Riches. And with respect to your Children, what can all the Wealth in the World avail them, if they want the Sense and Virtue to apply it to their own, and to the Benefit of others? Could you see them after you are dead, exposing themselves to Infamy by their sordid Avarice, or wasting their substance in Riot and Debauchery, how would you repent of that Parsimony, for which you now esteem yourself so wise and prudent? Besides, your Children may be deprived of the Wealth you leave them, though they should not be guilty of any Imprudence. Whereas, the good Qualities you cherish in their Minds, can neither be taken from them by force,

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force, nor lost by accident. They will not
only conduce, more than any thing else to
their Happiness in this Life ; but when the
time comes, at which they must part with
all outward Enjoyments, these alone will defy
Death, and secure to them a blessed Immor-
tality.

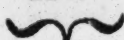
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LET me, therefore, exhort and conjure
you, by all that is sacred ; by your *regard* to
God, who has committed to your Care these
immortal Spirits ; by the Love you bear to
your Children ; and by all the Hopes you
entertain concerning them ; that you apply
yourselves to this great affair, with a Con-
cern proportioned to the Importance of it.
Thus if (which God forbid) your best En-
deavours should fail of Success, yet you will
have the satisfaction to think, you have ac-
quitted yourselves and done your Duty ; a
Consolation, which though perhaps it can-
not remove, will however alleviate your Grief,
at such a sad Disappointment. But if (as
you have good reason to expect) the Im-
provement of your Children shall be found
answerable to your Diligence about them,
you may well count it among the greatest
Blessings of your Life ; you will see them
growing

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growing up under your Care, into noble and excellent Creatures, the Delight of your Eyes, the Joy of your Hearts, the Solace of your declining years; Happy in themselves, useful in life, affectionate and serviceable to you; loved by the good, respected by all Men; and, to crown all, bidding fair for eternal Felicity.

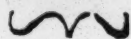
I SHALL only add this one Reflection before I conclude; If a good Education is such an unspeakable Advantage, what Gratitude is due, both to God and their Parents, from those, who have enjoyed it? To God, for their Parents; To their Parents, for their laudable and affectionate Care—*Marcus Antonius*, a Roman Emperor, thanks God, not that he was descended from a *Prince*, and born to *Empire*; but that he had good Parents, who procured for him excellent Instructors, and endeavoured to inspire him with the love of Virtue, by their own Examples and Counsels. I bless God, says he, that since it was my Mother's fate to die young, I lived with her in her latter Years: Of her I learned to be pious to God, and liberal to Men; to guard not only against unjust Actions, but also against evil Thoughts
and

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and Designs ; and to content myself with a spare Diet, far different from the Softness and Luxury, so common among the Great.

In my Father I observed his Contentment in every Condition ; his Chearfulness, his Forethought about very distant Events ; his Zeal to retain his Friends ; treating them neither with cold Indifference, nor foolish Fondness :

How he was neither a superstitious Worshiper of the Gods, nor an ambitious Pleaser of Men, nor studious of Popularity ; but sober in all things, steadfast, well skilled in what is honourable, never affecting Novelties. As

to those things which are subservient to Ease and Convenience, he used them without Pride, and yet with all Freedom ; enjoyed them without Affectation, when they were present ; and when absent he found no want of them.

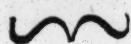
He was not celebrated as a Learned Man, or a great Wit ; but as a judicious, experienced, honest Man : Superior to Flattery ; qualified to manage his own and other Mens Affairs.

I further observed his Sociableness, his agreeable and useful Conversation ; his regular, moderate Care of his Body ; neither like one desirous of long life, or over studious

of

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of Neatness and Elegancy ; and yet not as one who despised them. From him I learned Mildness, Patience of Labour, an inflexible Justice toward all Men ; Abstinence from impure Lusts ; a Sense of Humanity towards others ; and Constancy in those things, which appear right after due Examination. Such were the Sentiments of that wise and excellent Prince. To these I shall subjoin a Passage out of another celebrated Writer much to the same Purpose.

IT seems, says he, I am upbraided with the Meanness of my Birth. But I shall not defend myself, as some do ; who say, It was not their Fault, if they had not great and honourable Ancestors ; my Language and Sentiments differ widely from theirs. For if Nature could order Time to go backwards, and every Man was to come into the world again, choosing for himself what Father he pleased ; I, for my part, should be content with my own, and prefer him to those who enjoy the highest Dignities in the State. For, if I am not chargeable with Avarice, Debauchery or any foul Crime ;

if

their Children a good Education.

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if I live in the main upright, innocent, and dear, to my Friends; it is all owing to my Father; who taught me betimes to shun Vice, by shewing me Examples among my Acquaintance of Persons, who had made themselves infamous and miserable by it. Though he had no great Estate he brought me up in a manner equal to many of my superiors; taking me to the best Masters; himself observing, how they performed their Duty, as a most uncorrupt and faithful Guardian; thus in short, he preserved me both from Guilt and Shame; not at all concerned lest any should upbraid him with it, if by having so much laid out on my Education, I should be forced, like him, to get my Living in some low Employment; nor should I have been dissatisfied with it in the least. He merits no small Praise; and from me the highest Gratitude upon these accounts; and so long as I am in my senses, I shall never be ashamed of such a Father.

I SHALL conclude with observing upon these Passages, that though all Men are under very great Obligations to those who have protected

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tested and cherished them in their Infancy; yet those Parents, who have taken pains to furnish the Minds of their Children with Wisdom and Virtue, deserve much better from them, than those can possibly do, who have confined their Care to their Bodies and Fortunes.





S E R M O N X.

THE DUTY of CHILDREN to their
PARENTS.



COLOSSIANS iii. 20.

*Children, obey your Parents in all
Things ; for this is well pleasing unto
the LORD.*



HIS Precept seems to be directed to those Children principally, who are not yet arrived at Years of Maturity : For it requires such an universal, an absolute Submission to the Commands of their Parents, as is not always due, nor usually expected from those, who are come to the full Use of their

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Reason.



Reason. I shall therefore understand it as containing the Duty, not of all, who have Parents ; but of those, who, having Parents, are as yet in a state of Childhood or Youth.

I SHALL begin with considering the Ground and Foundation of that unlimited Obedience, which is required from such Children towards their Parents. The Reason assigned for it in the Text, is, because it *is well pleasing unto the Lord*. And when we are fully assured (as in the present case we are) that such or such a Conduct is well pleasing to God, we are under indispensable Obligations strictly to pursue it. Nevertheless, since God does not make our Actions *right* by approving them ; but approves them when they are *right*, because they are *right* : it may be of use to enquire, upon what accounts it is right and well pleasing to God, that Children in their early years should obey their Parents in all things.

AND first, let it be observed, that the obligation to Obedience, does not arise from the bare relation of Parent and Child : For, if a Parent loseth the use of his Reason, he still continues to be a Parent, yet his Child is no longer obliged to observe his Directions. In
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like manner, if we can suppose any man to be so unnatural, as to *hate* and seek to destroy his own Offspring; none will say, that he has nevertheless a right to claim from them subjection and Obedience, though the *natural* Relation remains unaltered. Children, therefore, are not bound to obey their Parents, *merely* because they are their Parents, but also upon account of some *personal Qualifications*.

WE are next to explain, what those Qualifications are, which are the farther grounds and supports of Parental Authority; and these seem to be, superior Prudence in the Parents, together with Affection and Care for their Children. As Subjection is no Duty in the Child, when these Qualifications are wanting in the Parent; so, on the other hand, when these are present in the one, (as they almost perpetually are) Homage is due, and Disobedience criminal in the other.

Nor only in this, but in many other instances, Superiority of Wisdom constitutes just title to Government and Command, that Superiority is manifestly attended with good Dispositions towards those, who are inferior. From hence the authority

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rity of God himself is derived. His *right* to command, and our *duty* to obey, do not result only from that Power, by which he created all things, and subdues them under him : but also from the Perfection of his Wisdom, in which he infinitely exceeds all other Beings ; and from that of his Goodness, which disposes him constantly to do what is best for his Creatures. And in any human Society, if it could be certainly determined, which of the Members is wiser and better than the rest ; it would be foolish and wrong in them, not to submit to his Judgment and Direction. Folly is equally unfit to guide itself, as to govern others : It walketh in Darkness, and can neither discern where it is to go, nor how to surmount the Obstacles and avoid the Evils that lie in its way. Being left to itself, it stumbles and falls. It is frightened where there is no danger ; and when danger is at hand, it runs upon it with unwary Confidence. It sees not its own Advantage, and while it wanders in quest of good, it plunges into evil. In order to be happy, it must be subject ; nor can it be safe without a Guide.— It is Wisdom's Prerogative and natural right to give law to Ignorance and Folly, and to invert

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this Rule is unfortunate and dangerous, both to those who are governed, and those who govern.

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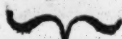
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To illustrate this by a few plain Examples. When a Person is sick, who is ignorant in Physick, he esteems himself happy, if he can procure the assistance of an honest and skilful Physician, and strictly observes his Orders and Prescriptions. In Husbandry, Building, and the like Arts ; Who is it that gives Directions ? And to whom ? But, the knowing to the unknowing ? If a number of men are aboard a Vessel in a dangerous Sea, one of which is known to understand Navigation better than the rest, his superior Skill it is that qualifies him to be their Governor : They listen to and execute his Orders, as knowing, that this will be safest and best for them all. In like manner, it is right in a Family ; best for the whole, and for each individual, that Children should receive Commands from their Parents with entire Submission and Obedience, as Mariners from their Pilot ; as the Sick from his Physician ; as Mankind from God.

AMONG other persons, it may not sometimes be easy to determine, which is the wisest and ought to govern. But that can seldom happen between Parents and Children :

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dren: For here the disproportion in point of Wisdom, is generally so evident and great as to leave no room for Disputes; and renders all Competition perfectly ridiculous. In other cases, we may have reason to doubt of their Integrity, whose Prudence in many respects is unquestionably superior to our own: And therefore we are not obliged to submit to their Directions, because they may employ their Abilities wickedly to our prejudice. But Nature has so powerfully recommended to mankind their own Offspring; and so closely united their Interests together: that all, but a few Monsters in our kind, desire and intend, as sincerely as their own, the Welfare of their Children. Who being thus confident of the Love, and assured of the superior Discretion of their Parents, are under the strongest obligations to Subjection and Obedience.

AND now, if it be asked; How far, and in what respects it is the Duty of Children to obey their Parents? I answer, In all those things, which they understand better than their Children: That is to say; Always, in *most* things; Generally, and for some time, in all. Indeed while they are yet in a state of Childhood and youth, they may have learned

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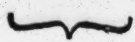
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learned some particular Art, or branch of Knowledge, with which their Parents are not so perfectly acquainted, and if their Parents should be so unreasonable as to prescribe to them in those Affairs, which they evidently understand better than themselves ; I know not upon what grounds they can justly expect Obedience from them. In such instances, it should seem to be the business of the Parents, rather to receive, than to give Directions. But, with respect to the common Affairs and general Duties of Life, it were no high compliment to the judgment of Parents, to say they know them better than their Children ; and have therefore a right to direct and govern them. Parents have had a long Experience in the world ; their Children little or none : Longer Experience begets superior Wisdom ; and their superior Wisdom, invests them with a full and proper Authority.

FROM what has been said, it is evident however, that this right to command, is such, as may be impaired and lost : For, as it depends upon certain *personal* Qualifications, whenever, and in whatever respects they cease to be possessed of these Qualifications,

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it dies and vanishes. And here I must beg leave to offer to you who are Parents, a little Advice, which arises naturally from the foregoing reasoning; and, as will shortly appear, is not foreign to our present Subject. You see, your *Right* to govern your Children, depends upon your prudence and affectionate Care. It concerns you, therefore, in the *First* place, to see to it, that you have these Qualities; and *Secondly*, to make your Children sensible, that you have them. By observing the former of these Directions, you will establish your Authority; and if you can accomplish the latter, you will secure, in the best manner, its influence upon your Children.

PARENTS frequently are heard to complain, that their Children slight their Commands, and fail not to impute such neglects, to a perverse and obstinate Temper in them. And often, no doubt, the Charge is just. Yet sometimes, I cannot but think, the Disobedience of Children may be chiefly owing to the imprudent and tyrannical Behaviour of their Parents. Their Children rebel against them, because they govern foolishly or wickedly; and slight their Orders, because they do

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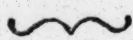
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do not deserve to be obeyed. They expose themselves to the contempt of their Children, by being guilty of daily Indiscretions in their presence, and making them Witnesses of their ridiculous Passions, mean Purposes, and ill-concerted Measures. Instead of making the Welfare of their Children the end of their Government, they enjoin such things as are wrong in themselves, and hurtful to them; or command purely because they take a pleasure in commanding. By these methods they alienate the Affections of their Children, lose their Confidence, and wipe out of their minds all remains of reverence towards them; and when in consequence of this, their Children are unwilling to comply with their harsh and unreasonable Commands, they enforce them with the Whip; and by a cruel and slavish Punishment embitter their Minds and cause them to regard themselves as their worst Enemies. No wonder, therefore, if, as soon as they have opportunity, they take their revenge, by refusing submission to those under whose Tyranny, they are so basely abused.

If you would secure in the best manner, the Obedience of your Children; endeavour
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by Words and Actions to convince them of your Prudence and sincere Concern for their Welfare, and you will have little occasion for Scourges and Frowns. In order that your Children may reverence you, do you first reverence your Children ; and dare not to say or do any thing in their presence, which might cause them to think meanly, either of your Understanding or Temper. Every fault and error they take notice of in you, weakens their Sense of your Authority ; and even Children, as well as others, will be more sharp-sighted at discerning your Faults, than you perhaps are aware of. Do not therefore indulge yourself in them, under a presumption that they will escape unobserved. Lay aside, as much as possible, all Passion, Levity and Caprice, which will not fail to render you, or any man, sufficiently contemptible ; and study to appear venerable to your Family by steadily conducting the Affairs of it with calm and manly Discretion,

As to the *Exercise of your Authority* ; you will scarce think it proper to interpose in every trifling Affair, in which there may be little or no need of your Direction : For, as in this case, your Orders will be useless,
both

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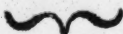
both you and they will be in some danger of falling into contempt. You must have observed, how ungrateful it is to all men, *old* and *young* to be dictated to in a harsh and imperious manner ; whereas they are usually well-pleased with friendly Advice, and easy to be influenced by it, when it is wisely administered. This method therefore you should prefer to the other, and seldom have recourse to positive Commands, except when Advice has proved ineffectual. When you give them Directions, it will be worth your while to shew them, not only what they are to do, but for what reason : This, it is true, cannot always be done for want of Capacity in your Children ; but usually it may, if you will take due Pains. Wherefore let them not so often hear you say, *I will have it so ; as, it is best it should be so ; and upon such, or such Accounts it is best.* Thus you will at once instruct your Children, encrease your Influence upon them, and make them go about the Performances of your Commands with unspeakable Chearfulness.

ABOVE all things, be solicitous to convince them, that you heartily love them ; which, though we have placed it last, is first in Importance.

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Importance. Strive to create and preserve in them, an entire Confidence of your Affection; not so much by fond Careffes and hurtful Indulgence, as by a constant and watchful Care over them. Make it to appear that you do not rule them principally for your own Ease, Pleasure and Convenience; much less out of a Love of Dominion; but for their Benefit, over whom you rule. In a word; govern well, and you will be chearfully obeyed. Let your Children see in you an example of parental Prudence and Affection: and unless they are of very untoward natures indeed, you will find in them a proportionable degree of filial Respect.

PRESUMING you will pursue these Measures, I now turn myself from you to your Children; and shall endeavour to shew them, how much it is their Interest, as well as their Duty, to be obedient to you.

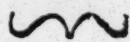
You, to whom I am now speaking, are but lately arrived in human Life, and have seen but a little, and for a very short time, of what is done under the sun. When you came into the world, you opened your eyes upon a various and perplexed scene, in which every thing was new and mysterious to you.

You

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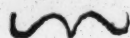
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You had not then the least apprehensions of Truth or Falshood ; Good or Evil ; Friends or Enemies : By degrees your Curiosity began to work ; your Faculties opened ; Reason dawned and glimmered ; and you have at last formed some confused and imperfect Notions of human Affairs : But as yet your Observations have been few, and your Views confined to a very narrow Compass. You ought therefore by no means to esteem it any reproach to you, to say, that hitherto you are far short of the Perfection of Prudence ; for considering the nature and condition of Mankind, you may think yourselves fairly dealt with, if at last in old Age you can attain to just Opinions and a sound judgment. Knowledge comes by Study and Experience ; Study and Experience require Time, and your Time has not been long. You will find yourselves mistaken, if you imagine, that a small share of Prudence is sufficient to conduct you through life happily and successfully. The World is a Wilderness, divided by an infinite number of Roads, which winding about and crossing each other every now and then, form a perplexed and darksome Labyrinth. The way of Wisdom is one and single, in
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places the Path is but little beaten, and not easy to be discerned. All the rest, being cut out by Folly, are full of snares and Dangers, and lead to Vexation, Disappointment and Misery. The Arts, by which Life is governed and sustained, are not to be acquired without Instruction and Practice. Mankind, with whom you are to converse, and on whom upon many accounts you are obliged to depend, are deceitful and dangerous: Fools will mislead you; Knaves will prey upon you; and it is often as much as older People than you can do, to distinguish those who may securely be trusted, from such as ought to be suspected and feared.

If such Creatures as you had been turned out into such a World as this, without any body to govern you, how miserable must you have been! Happy it is for you, that Heaven has provided you with Guides, in whose Fidelity and Prudence you may safely confide. Your Parents have performed that part of the Journey of life, which now lies immediately before you; they are acquainted with many of the Difficulties and Dangers of the way, and can instruct you by what means you may escape or pass through them

in

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in the best manner : And by hearkening to
their Instructions, you may have all the
benefit of that Knowledge for nothing,
which cost them, it may be, dear enough.

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They have learned from Experience, which,
though not always the cheapest, is the most
infallible Master. By recollecting the Suc-
cesses of different Measures and Counsels in
time past, they are enabled to calculate wisely
for the future. They are versed in the Arts
of civil and domestick life, to which you
are in a great measure Strangers ; and have
had opportunity to collect many general Ob-
servations and Maxims, the Truth and Use-
fulness of which they have seen confirmed by
repeated Trials. By conversing long amongst
Mankind, and having to do with people
of all Conditions, Manners and Characters,
they have gained that Acquaintance with
the World, which you cannot pretend to, but
which is absolutely necessary to a secure and
prosperous life.

Thus, in the most important points of
Prudence, they almost infinitely exceed you.
And as they know much better than you,
so you may be assured they will choose,
according to the best of their Knowledge,
what

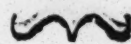
what is most for your Benefit. Do not they make you the Objects of their daily Care? Do they not employ their Time and Thoughts in educating, guarding and providing for you? How little do they regard what Pleasures they forego, or what Pains they endure, so they can but promote your Welfare and Prosperity? You cannot therefore doubt, but it is among the first and principal of their wishes, that you may be happy.

SUCH are the Guardians, Nature has appointed to introduce you into Life, and govern your unexperienced Minds. Ought you not then to regard them as the greatest Blessings, which, in your present circumstances, Heaven could bestow? Ought you not to rejoice, that God has supplied your want of Prudence by the Wisdom of your Parents? and, ought you not to place your great Security and Happiness in being ruled by them? What more than childish Folly does it betray in you, if you are unwilling to comply with their Counsels and Directions? Would you do what is best for yourselves? cease to follow the giddy Suggestions of your own Fancy, and commit yourselves to the Con-
duct

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duct of your Parents. You cannot at present, give a more certain sign of your Discretion, than by entertaining a modest distrust of your own raw Judgment; and paying a due deference to their Wisdom, which is ripened and confirmed by Years and Experience. You should therefore apply to them for Instruction, and receive it with Cheerfulness and Gratitude, esteeming it always a Favour, as it is your Happiness, to be directed by them. In Deliberations of any Importance, when they are present, be more ready to hear, than to speak. If you venture to deliver your own Opinion, let it be rather proposed as a Question you desire them to resolve, than thrown out with Confidence, as something of which you are absolutely certain. Dispute not with them without necessity; and always do it in such a manner, as may shew, that you esteem their Judgment to be better than your own. Make them privy to all your Designs, for they well deserve your Confidence; and do not hastily engage in any undertaking, 'till you have first consulted them. In a Word; reverence your Parents as a kind of *domestick* Oracles, or *household* Gods. Let their Advice



be regarded as a Command ; and their Command as a *Voice* from Heaven.

NOTHING more frequently prevents Children from performing these duties than Conceit ; which Parents ought by all means to discountenance in them ; and not as some do, to encourage it by their Flatteries. For while there are Parents in the world, who take great pains to persuade their Children, that they are wonderfully wise above their years ; no wonder there are Children of little Modesty, and great Ambition, who think themselves as wise as their Parents, and too wise to be instructed and governed. They esteem Subjection as an argument of Ignorance and Weakness ; and, as they are sensible of no Ignorance, and confident of their own Sufficiency, they scorn to be controuled, and resolve to be the sole Directors of their own Conduct. Hence they make light of the Orders and Counsels of their Parents, who thus are oftentimes severely punished by that Vanity, which they themselves had been concerned in cherishing. And, as too high an Opinion of their own Understanding renders Children untractible to their Parents ; so it is also extremely dangerous and hurtful

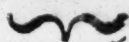
to

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to themselves. For as those Children, who attempt to walk before they are able, fall and are bruised; so those, who, out of a vain Conceit of their own Judgment, refuse the Assistance of their Parents, and trust too early to their own Abilities, usually fall into Perplexity and Distress.

LET me therefore advise you, who are Parents, to stifle as much as possible in the minds of your Children all the seeds of Vanity and Conceit. I must also recommend, to you, who are Children, a Study, of all others the most useful, I mean, *the Study of Yourselfes*. Consider seriously your own Ignorance; and learn to know how little you know. How many things are there of great importance to the right Conduct of Life, to which you are perfect Strangers? How many more, of which you have only some faint and confused Notions. With respect to all these things, if you are not directed and governed by those, who are wiser than you; what can you expect but Error and Disappointments? To be ignorant, it is true, is a Weakness: But it is a Weakness you need not be ashamed to confess, because it is inseparable from Youth, and always

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expected in it: And it will be a much greater and more shameful Weakness, if being ignorant, you do not know that you are ignorant. To need to be governed is a Weakness, but it is a Weakness, which has attended all young persons since the creation; and it will be a much greater Weakness, if, while you need Government, you imagine you can do as well without it.

LAY aside then this foolish Pride, this groundless Arrogance. Approve yourselves wise in this respect, in willingly submitting to be directed by your Parents, and obeying them in all things. Listen to their Instructions; follow their Advice; observe their Commands with Chearfulness and Diligence. In this consists your Security; on this your Happiness depends. This is what GOD, and all your Friends expect from you. Such a respectful and pious Behaviour will be grateful and acceptable to your Parents, and will still more endear you to them. It will be the first, and in their account, not the least return you can make them for all their Trouble and Care about you. They will rejoice to see you tractable and obedient; not only as this will make it easy for them to instruct
and

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and guide you ; but also as it will afford them the strongest Presumption of your future Prudence and wise Conduct in life.

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THUS we have endeavoured to explain and enforce the Duty of Children, in their early Years, to obey their Parents in all things. There are other Obligations, which all, who have Parents, are under towards them : And of these also we may possibly treat, upon some future Occasion.





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THE DUTY of YOUNG PERSONS to
their PARENTS.

Year XXX. 11. 17.

EXODUS XX. 12.

Honour thy Father and thy Mother.



IN a former Discourse I have endeavoured to explain the Duty of Children to obey their Parents in all things; which, as it is incumbent, in some measure, and in many cases, upon all, who have Parents; so especially upon those, who are not yet come to a Maturity of Reason. I now go on to describe some other Offices, which are due from

The Duty of Young Persons, &c.

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from all Men to their Parents, and which are well expressed in this short Precept of the Mosaical Law ; *Honour thy Father and thy Mother.*

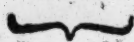
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NOT that I think Obedience to Parents is not required in this Commandment, or that those who have arrived to Years of Discretion are released from all Subjection to parental Authority. No; far from it. For though the Understandings of Children ripen with Years ; though they gradually become better qualified to guide themselves, and have the less need of Government, the more they improve in Sense and Discretion ; yet if they have now gained a greater measure of Knowledge by being longer in the world, so also have their Parents. That Part of Life which is before the Child, is always behind the Parent. They advance in Age at an equal Rate, and therefore the Distance between them continue the same. And as Parents always go before their Children in Time and experience, so they commonly exceed them far in Wisdom and Prudence. It often happens indeed that they do not understand some particular affairs so well as their Children, when they are grown up to Years of Discretion ;

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and with respect to such affairs they have no right to direct them, nor do they usually claim any. But as to the common Business, and general Duties of life, about which men most frequently deliberate, advise and give directions ; of these things, Parents for the most part, are more competent Judges than their Children ; and as far as they are so, they ought to be obeyed.

UPON these accounts, if any one, at whatever Age, being puffed up with a vain conceit of his own Wisdom, or influenced by the Pride and Obstinacy of his temper, despises the Counsels and Authority of his Parents ; he is guilty of a great Folly, of a shocking Indecency ! and may not I say, of impious Insolence ? Proportionable to the Crime, was the severity of the Punishment, which was inflicted on it by the law of *Moses*, *Deut. xxi.*

18. If a Man have a stubborn and rebellious Son, which will not obey the voice of his Father or the Voice of his Mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them, then shall his Father and his Mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the Elders of his City, and unto the Gate of his Place : And they shall say unto the Elders of his City,
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This our Son is stubborn, and rebellious, he will not obey our Voice, and all the Men of his City shall stone him with stones that he die. Of

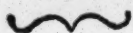
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such a severe and exemplary Punishment was this unnatural Crime then thought worthy; which, now a days, some are not ashamed to commit; while others would even esteem it a Shame to be free from it. But whatever is the practice of the World, the laws of God, of Prudence, Virtue, and good Manners conspire in requiring, that all men hold in high Veneration the Age and Authority of their Parents; consulting them in Affairs of Importance, and not hastily acting contrary to their Advice and Direction.—This is part of that Honour which is due from Children towards their Parents;—But there are many other Duties included in the Text, which I now proceed to describe and enforce.

No Obligation is more sacred than that of Gratitude: It is this, which binds Mankind to God. It is this which endears its Country to the generous Mind; which cements Friendship among private persons, and makes good Offices circulate in Society. An ungrateful Man is odious, not only in that Instance

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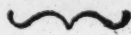
Instance in which he is ungrateful ; but also, as he must be incapable of almost every Virtue. Gratitude to Heaven constitutes a main Part of Piety, which therefore never resides in a breast insensible of Benefits. It is not possible he should prove a good Friend, Neighbour, or Member of a Community, who is not concerned to make any returns for the Favours he receives. Nor can he choose but be highly mischievous in Society ; who, by being ungrateful to his Benefactors, discourages generous Actions, and does what in him lies to banish Liberality from the earth. Ingratitude is not the least criminal kind of Injustice. Hence by the Laws of some Nations it has been made obnoxious to severe Punishments ; and where it has not been branded by the written Laws, it has always been condemned as base and detestable by the concurring Sense and Testimony of Mankind. Ingratitude, therefore, is one of the worst of Vices ; betraying, wherever it appears, a mean and worthless Temper ; and the Guilt of it rises in proportion to the greatness of the Benefits we have received, and the degree of their Benevolence, who conferred them upon us.

Now

Now, from whom of all Mankind have we received more and greater Benefits, than from our Parents? or who have given us stronger Evidence of their Affection for us, than our Parents? Who, in the First place, made suitable provision for us against the time of our Birth, and were the means of bringing us into Life, to see the Light of this World, and enjoy those Blessings, which God has bestowed on man. Nature delivered us into their hands, feeble, naked and defenceless; needing many things; not knowing what we needed; and incapable of doing any thing for ourselves. Had they neglected us in these circumstances, we had perished immediately through Want and Inability; but they voluntarily took upon themselves the Burden of cherishing and defending us, which nothing but their vehement Love and Affection for us, could have rendered tolerable. Upon our account they have abridged themselves of many Enjoyments: To us they have sacrificed in many instances their own Ease and Pleasures: For us they have endured much Labor, and felt many an anxious thought: For us they have gone through endless hardships by day and night, without intermission,

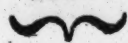
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intermission, with no little hazard of their Health, and even of their Lives ; In Sickneſs they attended us ; In Sorrow they comforted us ; and at all times furnished us with Food and Raiment ſuitable to our Condition. All this they did, and did it chearfully for our Sakes ; when we had done nothing for them ; when we knew not as yet our Guardians and Benefactors ; when we did not ſo much as aſk, or thank them for their Favours ; and when they had no aſſurance, they ſhould ever receive any Recompence for their pains.

THUS with infinite continual Care they conducted us through a feeble and tedious Infancy ; to the utmoſt of their Ability defending us from every kind of Evil, and procuring for us the Neceſſaries and Pleaſures of life. Nothing ordinarily is found more difficult than for Men to continue their Kindneſs to thoſe who do not repay it with Gratitude ; but our Parents perſiſted in doing us good, when we received their Benefits, not only with Ingratitude, but even with Diſpleaſure and froward Complaints. Nor did their trouble about us end with our Infancy : The Giddineſs of Youth demanded Reſtraint ; for if left to itſelf, it would have carried us to

hurt

hurt both ourselves and others. The Cares therefore of our Parents about us, were rather encreased than lessened, as we grew in Years. Before, they supported us with their Hands, now they were to guide us by Counsel and Discipline.

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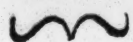
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It did not content them to promote the growth and vigour of our Bodies only ; they also applied themselves to improve our Minds, and enlarge our Understandings. When we were capable of learning, they taught us what they knew, which they apprehended would be useful to us. And what it concerned us to know, which they imagined others could teach us better than themselves ; they sent us to them to be instructed in it at their Expence ; endeavouring by all means to qualify us for behaving well and living happily in the world. How much we are obliged to our Parents upon this account will appear, if we consider ; That whatever Knowledge or Endowments of any kind we are furnished with, we derive them chiefly from Education ; and for our Education we are for the most part indebted to our Parents.

IN a Word, they communicated to us of all they possessed, which would be for our Advantage.

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Advantage. Of outward things they enjoyed the less themselves, that they might have the more to bestow upon us. They endeavoured to procure for us Friends and Fortunes, or to put us into a way of gaining them ourselves; that we might continue to live in a secure and comfortable manner; should Heaven deprive us of their Assistance. After all; their Wishes and Prayers, went far beyond their Power, and rested in nothing short of our Welfare in this World, and our Happiness for ever.

Now what returns should you make to your Parents for all their Benefits, which are thus infinite in Number, and invaluable in Importance? Can you satisfy yourselves with any thing less than a perpetual and hearty readiness to serve and oblige them according to your Ability? Can you esteem any Pains too great, any Labour too difficult, to endure for their sake, who never thought they could do enough for yours? There is no danger lest you should over-pay them: For you have contracted an immense Debt, which you will never be able fully to discharge: and the greatest part of which, if you do your utmost, you can pay in nothing, but in grateful

Sentiments

Sentiments and inward Respect. And the more you are forced to fall short, the greater

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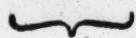
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should be your care to fall short as little as possible. *First*, then, it concerns you that you be duly sensible how much you are indebted to your Parents; and that your Hearts overflow with proportionable Gratitude. In the next place, that you express your Gratitude by being ready to do them all manner of good Offices. If you fail not in the *First*, you will hardly be wanting in the *Latter*; for a generous mind, loaden with Benefits, and sensible of its Obligations, will not be more impatient for any thing, than to make suitable Returns.

WE must know our Duty before we can practice it. I proceed therefore to lay before you a short Description of the Offices, you ought to perform to your Parents—And in general it becomes you, to honour them above all Men; to behave as their Inferiors in all respects, and chearfully to devote yourselves to their Service. You should regard them as a kind of inferior Deities; their House as a Temple; and yourselves as ordained and consecrated by God and Nature to minister unto them, and entrusted

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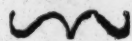
trusted with the sacred Office of attending and worshiping them. But, that our Precepts may run in some order, we may distinguish these Duties, as relating partly to the *Body*, partly to the *Mind*.

As to the *First*, We need not say much; for in this respect our Duty is so plain, that you can scarce mistake it. For you should be watchful over the Health of your Parents, and attend them with the utmost Diligence when they are sick. You should take care, they are plentifully furnished with the Necessaries and Comforts of life; and submit to the greatest hardships, sparing neither Expence nor Labour, rather than see them afflicted with the want of any thing. When they begin to decline, endeavour to procure Repose for them, which is commonly both desirable and necessary to *old* Persons. Redouble your Observance of them, that you may prevent any Suspicions of Neglect, which at that Season of life they are apt to entertain. Study to make them insensible of their growing Infirmities, by supplying their Weakness with your own Activity, and providing them with innocent Pleasures and Amusements. Imitate the Care they took of

of you in your Infancy ; do not always wait till you are told what will be agreeable to them ; but carefully observe their Tempers and Inclinations, and be forward to gratify them without being solicited. They have often discovered your Wants by your inarticulate Cries, and upon such imperfect Intimations have readily supplied them : Thus by the Benefits, they have heretofore conferred upon you, they have taught you after what manner you ought to behave to them.

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AND then with respect to their *Minds*, you should be cautious of giving Disgust, and endeavour to keep them chearful and contented. To this end you should converse frequently with them ; and spend as much time as conveniently you can in their Company : for, as it is agreeable to those, who are removing to a great Distance to be set forward by their Friends and Acquaintance ; so nothing is more grateful to Parents, when the time of their Departure is drawing near, than to see their Children attending them, and delighting in their Company. They are also mightily pleased, when their own Offspring minister unto them in those things, which seem to belong to the Servants Office ;

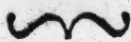
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Wherefore it is by no means a matter of indifference, whether you wait upon them yourself, or procure others to do it for you. They love to be served by those Hands which are dearest to them. You should therefore cheerfully engage in the lowest kind of Services ; always esteeming those the most honourable, when they are done for your Parents, which are in themselves the meanest and most difficult. And here their Pride deserves to be severely censured ; who, because perhaps they are a little exalted in the world, overlook their Parents, or at least think themselves too good to perform the common Offices of life to them. To neglect a Friend, when we are raised above him, is ungenerous and mean ; but to neglect a Parent, is most horrid and detestable Impiety !

It will also yield no small Satisfaction to your Parents, if you appear to love their Friends, and endeavour to defend them against their Enemies. The latter implies, that you guard their Persons and Reputation ; vindicate their Character from Slander and Detraction ; secure them from Contempt ; protect them from Insults, and assist them in prosecuting any just Quarrel. This is a
 necessary

To their Parents.

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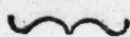
necessary, the other a more grateful Office; to honour those, that honour them, and express a particular respect for their Relations and Friends, and for every one according to the Share he has in their Esteem.

AND since you oblige your Parents by manifesting a regard for those they esteem, and you yourselves hold the chief place in their Affection; it is plain they will account it as a favour done to them, if you consult your own Advantage and Improvement. Methinks it should be no small inducement with an ingenuous mind to pursue a just and worthy conduct, when he reflects; by so doing I shall rejoice the Hearts of my Parents. On the other hand, it must surely be a powerful restraint upon any one, who is not utterly abandoned, if he considers that his vicious Behaviour will cover his Parents with Shame, and pierce them with unspeakable Anguish.

IT is an innocent, not to say a laudable Pride in Parents, which prompts them to desire, that others may see how respectful their Children are towards them. You should therefore honour them, as at other times, so also before their Acquaintance. In every thing prefer them to yourselves; pay a de-

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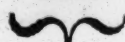
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ference to their Authority, comply with their Desires. Yet to these Precepts, I must add one limitation, If you cannot please your Parents, and gratify their Desires, without doing something that is mean, foolish, or wicked; whatever be the consequence, you ought to displease them: For, to follow their Will, when their Will goes contrary to the Laws of God and Justice, is nothing but a base and vicious Complaisance. It is right to obey God; it is right also to obey your Parents; And when the Observance of both leads you to the same Conduct, it is fortunate for you: But, if the divine Law directs you to go one way, and your Parents another; you ought to follow God and leave your Parents; disobeying them only in those things, in which they disobey the divine law.

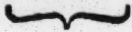
WHEN you observe any Slips and Failings in the conduct of your Parents (from which none alas are wholly free) you should endeavour to conceal them from the world with pious caution. If they are only lesser Faults which do little harm, and to which the best of Men are often subject; It is not worth while to make them uneasy by taking notice of them; you should therefore seem not to know

know them, But if they are likely to prove shameful to them, and hurtful to others, you may apply to some *old* and *faithful* Friend, from whom your Parents may receive Advice with a better grace. When this cannot so well be done, you may remind them of their Errors yourself, with Modesty and Mildness: In such cases it will not become you to indulge any Passion, besides sincere Tenderness and Regard for your Parents. Nor ought you to assume any censorious Airs, which might be more excuseable towards your *equals* or *inferiors*. You may let fall some short hint, or ask them, as if desiring to be informed, whether some other Course would not be better. After all, this is a work that requires a nice and skilful hand, to do it successfully and well: For all men are apt to be impatient of Admonition, especially when it proceeds from those who are younger than themselves, and from such as used to be subject to their Authority. Nevertheless, it were barbarous and undutiful to neglect your Parents, when they fall into any pernicious Errors; you should therefore do your best to correct their oversights, by mild Entreaty and artful Persuasion.



SOME of you perhaps will be ready to say; If I had had good Parents, I could chearfully have done all you have told me, and much more for their sake; but mine are of froward Tempers, and daily say and do many things so disagreeable to me, that I can scarce maintain any Affection for them; much less can I treat them with such high Respect.—Now, in the *first* place. Let me desire such persons (if any such now hear me) to examine their own Conduct, and answer honestly to themselves; Whether they have never given their Parents some just Reason to be displeased with them?— But granting, what I expect you will stiffly assert, that your behaviour to your Parents has really been unblamable; yet you can by no means justify yourself in despising and neglecting them, though perhaps they are not altogether so indulgent, mild, and good-natured as you could wish. For whatever they are, they have laid you under immense Obligations; and it is your business to look at the Benefits you have received, and see to it you make them suitable Returns. I allow it is far more difficult to behave well to an indifferent than to a good Parent; but the more difficult

difficult your Duty is, the greater strength of Virtue will you manifest in performing it, and the greater Praise will you deserve. You should consider, that your Parents, though they may be subject to some accidental starts of ill Humour (and who is not) yet in the main they love you heartily, and have expressed their Affection for you in a thousand good Offices. How often have they borne with your Frowardness by day and night, and continued to cherish you, when you were tormenting them incessantly; as on other accounts, so also by the Perverseness of your Words and Actions? And surely it is but reasonable, you should do that for them, which they have heretofore done for you, upon more occasions, and in a much higher degree. Besides, it becomes every one, and you more than any, to make great allowances for the Infirmities of their Age. A Person labouring under the Decays of Nature, and long harraßed so as to be almost worne out in the Warfare of this world, can rarely preserve that Evenness and Composure of Spirit, without which good Humour cannot steadily subsist. And if their Temper is impaired, and soured in any degree, this

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may have been owing in a great measure to the Toils and Anxieties they have daily endured upon your account. You ought therefore not only to excuse them, but to love them the better for these Failings, which have grown upon them through an anxious Concern for your own Welfare. Upon the whole; you should pity, or wholly overlook the Imperfections of your Parents: When you yourself are affected by them, you should bear them with perfect Mildness and good Temper, nor ever remit of your Diligence in cherishing and honouring them upon these accounts.

THUS you are to treat them as long as they live; and when they have walked the way of Nature, you are not released from all Obligations towards them. Extravagant Grief is always Criminal; but to be somewhat sensibly affected with the Death of a Parent, is not only lawful, but even decent and commendable. It will become you, to retain a Veneration for their Memory; to imitate their Virtues; to respect their Friends; to fulfil their Desires with the same Piety, as if they were still living; and to act at all times as under their Inspection; which, for ought
you

you know, you sometimes are. In a word, as their Regard for you, begun before you were born; so yours for them, should continue when they are dead.

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Now, to excite ingenuous Minds to the diligent Performance of these duties, it will be sufficient to remind them of the Deformity of Ingratitude; and the numberless Benefits, for which every man stands indebted to his Parents. To this I may add, that as nothing is more honourable in itself, or more delightful to its possessor, than a truly grateful Heart; so Gratitude never reflects a greater Lustre, nor ever yields a more sincere and exquisite Delight, than when it is exercised towards our Parents. These Considerations I just mention here, having enlarged upon them already. But if any are so disingenuous, as not to be wrought upon by such Arguments; let me desire their Attention to the following Reflexions.

It is certainly of some importance, to secure the Esteem and good Opinion of Mankind; which, besides the Satisfaction immediately resulting from it, is the great Security of life, and facilitates every Undertaking. But this you cannot reasonably hope to obtain,

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tain, if you abuse or neglect your Parents; for such a Conduct is universally detested as base and unnatural to a monstrous degree. View it in some of your Acquaintance, and see how it looks: You cannot but be shocked at it, whenever you observe it any besides yourself. And what are the Sentiments of the world concerning it, you may learn from their Censures in the case of others. How severely do all men exclaim against it? And load with the bitterest Reproaches such as are guilty of it: And what they say of others to you, you may be assured, they will be ready enough to say of you to others. In short, there is nothing of worse Fame, or that will fix a more odious Blot upon a man's Character, than ill Behaviour to his Parents.

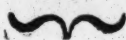
Wise men especially, as far as they know your *domestic* Conduct, from thence principally will form their Judgment of your Manners and Temper. Now, of *domestic* Virtues, Piety to Parents bears the most amiable and engaging Aspect; and the opposite Vice is proportionably hateful: Wherefore if you are guilty of it, you are in danger of being left utterly destitute of valuable Friends. For
who,

who, I beseech you, in his senses, will dare to court or accept his Friendship, who has abused the best Friends and greatest Benefactors he had upon Earth? How it may be with others I do not so well know; but for my own part, when I see a Man neglecting his Parents, I cannot forbear saying to myself; "God forbid I should have any thing to do with so base a Villain:" At least, may I cautiously avoid his Friendship; for by what Benefits may I hope to bind him to me? Can I pretend to lay him under greater Obligations, than his Parents have done? Or is it likely, that he, who has been ungrateful to them, will use me honourably?

SUCH are the Rewards, you may expect to gain by failing in your Duty to your Parents: You will lose your Character; be suspected and shunned by the wise and good; and detested by all Men as an unnatural Monster. To which I may add, Remorse of Mind; for though conscience may sleep at present, there are certain Seasons of Life in which it may possibly awake to your Confusion. When you shall attend your Parents to their Graves, if you can bear the Thought, that you have abused them when living, you
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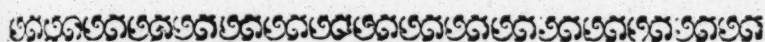
can bear any thing. Or, should you live to be despised by Children of your own, how will it aggravate your misfortune, when you are *forced* to confess, they only treat you, as you heretofore treated your own Parents?

BUT to conclude, If you are not afraid to break through the fences of Honour and Conscience; let the restraints of Religion, at least put a stop to your Career. The Favour of Providence is confined to those, that are pious and grateful; but how can you be pious towards your heavenly Father, and grateful either to God or Man, while you are impious and ungrateful to your earthly Parents? If you honour your Parents, you will also honour God, whose images they are, and be honoured by him. But, if you despise them, a Punishment hangs over you, which you cannot escape; for the just Vengeance of Heaven will attend you in this World, nor leave you in the next.



S E R M O N X I I .

THE PARENT'S JOY, the CHILD'S
MOTIVE to WISDOM.



PROVERBS xxiii. 24, 25.

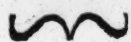
The Father of the Righteous shall greatly rejoice; and he, that begetteth a wise Child, shall have Joy of him. Thy Father and thy Mother shall be glad; and she, that bare thee, shall rejoice.



SOLOMON here suggests to young Persons in a very beautiful manner, a strong Argument to excel in Wisdom and Goodness. Having first asserted in general, that Parents derive great Joy from the prudent and laudable

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ble Behaviour of their Children: He imagines some Youth to be present, and immediately addresses the Thought to him in particular.—*Thy Father and thy Mother shall be glad, and she, that bare thee, shall rejoice.* It is observable, he does not deliver it in the form of an Exhortation, or a Precept; but only mentions the Effect, which the Virtue of his Pupil would have upon his Parents, and leaves it to his own Ingenuity to make the application. A short Hint, which the Mind is thus left to pursue of itself, and which naturally leads it into a train of useful Reflections, is often as effectual, as an Argument drawn out at full length, and urged with all the force of Eloquence and Reason.

It is also worthy of remark, that the royal Author does not content himself, with barely saying *once*, the Parents of a good Man shall rejoice; but he repeats it again and again, mentioning *each* of the Parents distinctly. THE FATHER of the Righteous; and HE THAT BEGETTETH a wise Child: THY FATHER and MOTHER, and SHE, THAT BARE THEE, *shall rejoice.*—Repetitions by no means superfluous and trifling, for they add great Force to the Sentiment,

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as they oblige his Pupil to consider attentively, what Persons those are, who will reap so much Satisfaction from his Virtue: Namely, those, to whom he is under the highest Obligations, and to whom he cannot deny such a reasonable Delight, without being chargeable with the basest Ingratitude.

IN what follows, I shall endeavour to illustrate *Solomon's* Observation, that the Parents of wise and good Children shall greatly rejoice. Not that I pretend to give a compleat Description of this Joy. It ariseth upon such various Accounts, and upon so many Occasions; it is so fine and calm in its Nature, and so lively in its Impressions, that to be thoroughly understood it must be experienced: Nor is it in the power of Language to convey a perfect Idea of it, to those who never felt the Impression. You, therefore, who are blessed with this noble Satisfaction, must excuse me, if I fail of doing Justice to the Happiness you enjoy; while I only attempt to point out the principal Sources, from which it flows, and some of the many agreeable Sentiments, with which it is attended. I am under no apprehensions lest you should think I exaggerate, and as to others,

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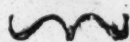
others, who may censure me in this Respect, I may justly appeal from theirs, to your Judgment.

A PARENT then, especially a good Parent, whose Children walk in the ways of Wisdom, will from thence conceive a very sensible Joy, both upon their account and his own. He will rejoice principally *upon their account* : For, as it is the earnest Desire of his Heart, that his Children may be happy, so he will esteem nothing so essential to their Happiness, as their own Prudence and honourable Conduct. Nay, it is not uncommon for Men who have not much Merit themselves, to take great Delight in the Excellences of their Children : Whether this proceeds from the Prejudice implanted in all Men by Nature in favour of Goodness ; which though in bad Men it is overborne by their Appetites and Passions, yet sways their Approbation, when they calmly judge of the Circumstances of others : Or whether it proceeds from mere Selfishness, and the Reflection, that the Prudence, Sobriety and Diligence of their Children, will make them more serviceable to themselves : Whatever is the Cause, certain it is, that Persons of very
indifferent

indifferent Characters, often recommend Virtue to their Children; and are pleased to see them pursue a Conduct opposite to their own.

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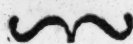
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BUT a sensible and good Man, who understands well the value of Virtue, will be much more strongly affected with this Joy. With what inward Satisfaction doth such an one observe a Son or a Daughter, doing commendable Actions; improving daily in useful Knowledge and amiable Qualities; growing in Favour with God and Man; and pursuing the Paths, which lead to Peace and Honour in this World, and to immortal Bliss in the World to come? Indeed, when Youth blooms with good Sense, and generous Dispositions, it affords Pleasure to as many as behold it; both on account of its Amiability at present, and the Hopes, it inspires of producing in time the most excellent Fruits. Now if others cannot survey these united Charms without being moved with Complacency and Admiration, in what manner must they work upon the Heart of a Parent, who is so deeply interested in the Welfare of his Offspring, and who can consider the Virtues, with which they are adorn-

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ed, as owing in a great measure to his own Industry and Care about them?

As a well wrought Picture is graceful to all Spectators, but yields the finest pleasure to the Artist, who designed and finished it; so the Wisdom and Goodness of young Persons are agreeable to others, but most of all to their Parents, who, by the touches of a nobler Art, have produced in their Minds these most perfect, though invisible Beauties. Thus the Parent's Joy is doubled upon him, when he can regard the Excellence of his Children, as the Reward of Heaven for the Pains and Expence, he had bestowed on their Education. A Mind, not void of Humanity, must feel unspeakable Pleasure at the thought, that it has been the Instrument of making any of its Fellow-Creatures virtuous and happy: For, if to have raised a noble Tree, or formed a lifeless Statue, is matter of Satisfaction; what is it to have wrought a living Soul into its due Form, and assisted an immortal Spirit by proper Cultivation, to attain that Perfection, of which its Maker has rendered it capable? Especially when a Man has done this for his own Offspring, who
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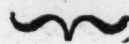
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are dearer to him, than almost any thing in the world besides.

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OTHERS may rejoice in the Beauty, Wealth and Splendor of their Children. A wise Man also will perhaps be pleased upon these accounts; but much more pleased, when he sees them possessed of those Endowments, which will enable them to behave well in any Condition, and still attend them through all the Revolutions of Time and Fortune. He will rejoice, when they prefer the just and honourable part, though it costs them dear in point of worldly Interest. In *Sparta*, we are told, when they had lost a Battle, the *Mothers* of such, as had saved themselves by Flight, were afflicted with Grief and Shame; while they, whose Sons died nobly in defence of their Country, appeared joyful in public, and received the Congratulations of their Friends, on the Deaths of their Children—*Vanity*, you may say, *mere Vanity!* And why not rather a just Affection for their Offspring, as well as for the Public? But be it *Vanity*, it is however a Noble *Vanity*; and if some Parents had more of that *Pride*, which is gratified by the *Virtue* of their Children; and less of that,

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which



which piques itself on seeing them excel in trivial Accomplishments, it would be no worse either for the World or for their Children.

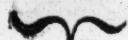
INDEED it may sometimes be prudent in Parents to conceal their Satisfaction, lest, by an unseasonable Ostentation of it, they should provoke the Envy of little Minds: or else they doubtless enjoy, by Reflection, all the Blessings, which their Children derive to themselves by their Virtues. When they become eminent in any Art, Science or Profession; when by a laudable Industry, they improve their Fortunes; when they gain the Friendship of good Men; when they flourish in general Esteem and Credit; their Parents are no less, I believe, they are often better pleased, than if they themselves had obtained the like Advantages. Nor is it a mean Satisfaction to a benevolent man, that he has trained up those, who not only add Strength and Ornament to his own Family, but are serviceable and dear to his friends; and by their Prudence, Justice, Humanity and Temperance, are qualified to fill up some Stations in life honourably and well. For as the Consciousness, that he has served his Generation with Integrity, yields him the most
sub-

substantial Enjoyment; so next to this we may place the Delight, which flows from a Sense, that by his Example and Instructions he has formed others to the like useful Conduct, who may be Blessings both to this and the following Generations.

A PARENT has also great Reason to rejoice in the Virtues of his Children *upon his own Account*. If they are frugal, they will be the more easily maintained. If they are industrious and prudent, they will assist him so much the better in the management of his affairs. If they are generous and grateful, they will study to repay the Obligations, he has laid upon them, by ministering to him with Respect and Chearfulness in the decline of his Life. Not to mention the Praise, which redounds to him from the Excellence of his Children: For true Honour is much more easily traced from the Son to the Father, than from the Father to the Son. The Child can frame no just Title to personal Merit on account of the worthy Actions of its Parents; but, the laudable Conduct of their Offspring reflects Honour upon Parents; as it affords a good Presumption, that in forming their Manners they discharged their

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Office with Fidelity and Prudence. Hence it is, that no glory of their Ancestors has been able to rescue from Oblivion the worthless Descendants of great and good Men; while many have risen out of Obscurity, and obtained immortal Fame, by the eminent Wisdom and Virtue of their Children.

THE respect, which is shewn to Parents on their Children's account, is no less grateful to them, than that which is paid to their personal Merit; but the highest Honour, they can receive from others, is not half so valuable in their Esteem, as the affectionate Regard of their own Offspring; This is delightful, both for its own sake, and for the Ease, Advantage, and Security, which flow from it; especially when they approach towards the confines of Age; which, to others, indeed is melancholy enough; but to him, who is blest with dutiful Children, the prospect of Age is pleasant, and the passage through it easy and agreeable. When he begins to be tired in the Journey of Life, how does it revive his Spirits, when he has those to attend and converse with him, who are as dear to him, as he is to himself; and who, he knows, have the sincerest Love and Vene-

Veneration for him? Does he want to accomplish any Design? He is provided with Servants, who make it the Study of their Lives to please him, and chearfully perform whatever he directs. Mankind value his Friendship the more, as by means of his Children, he is better able to oblige his Friends: And his Enemies (if they have any discretion) will not be so forward to insult him, though now become weak himself, when they see him attended with such faithful Guards. In sickness they minister to him with Care and Tenderneſs, and at all times ſupply the Decays of his Strength by their own Vigour, and thus render him almoſt inſenſible of his growing Infirmities. His Influence and Power encrease with his years; and all theſe Bleſſings, however conſiderable in themſelves, are vaſtly heightened in his eſtimation, when he regards them as ſo many Teſtimonies of his Childrens Affection, which in itſelf is dearer to him, than all the Advantages, he can derive from thence.

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SUCH a Parent, one would think, muſt be ſufficiently ſenſible of his own Happineſs, without the help of Compariſons. If not, let him look around him, and obſerve the

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Miseries, which many suffer on account of the undutiful Behaviour, and Wickedness of their Offspring. How some are burdened with slothful, others devoured by intemperate, others neglected and abused by ungrateful Children ; how their Hearts are pierced with Grief and Shame, and the bitterness of their Age encreased by those, from whom they had promised themselves the greatest Consolation : It cannot fail of adding to his Satisfaction, thus to reflect on the Calamities, with which other Parents are exercised; not that he rejoices in their Afflictions ; but the Consideration of them, at the same time that it moves his Pity, awakens in his Mind a more lively Sense of his own Happiness.

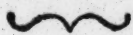
It is undoubtedly some Abatement of this Joy, that the Parent cannot but be sensible of the Mortality of his Children. The better they are, the more he loves them ; and consequently the heavier must be his Sorrow for their Deaths, and the greater his Concern, when he only considers it as a very possible Case, that he may live to lament them. Shall he then study to banish the thought of their Mortality ? This would be a very dangerous expedient ; for, if such an

Event

Event should befall him unexpected, the Surprise might render his Sorrow unsupportable. A wise Man, therefore, will rejoice in his Children as mortal Creatures; and while he is pleasing himself with their Excellence and Virtue, will retain it among his inmost Thoughts, that they are every day obnoxious to Death. Nor do I see why this apprehension should greatly damp the Parent's Joy: For though, when he is deprived of good and pious Children, his own loss is considerable; yet his Childrens gain is much greater: they have escaped early beyond the reach of human Miseries, and are become, what they could never have been in this World, as happy, as he can wish them. His Joy therefore upon their account, should balance the Sorrow, he may conceive upon his own. Thus if God removes them first out of Life, he can comfort himself with the Reflection, that they are only gone a little before him to encrease the number of Saints in Heaven. On the other hand, if they are suffered to attend him through the whole of his Pilgrimage, he can look beyond it with a joyful Assurance, that they will continue to behave well, when they must no longer enjoy the
benefit

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benefit of his Care and Counsel; that they will convey down his Name to Posterity with Honour; and that, as soon as they have finished their Course on Earth, they will follow him into a State of immortal Blessedness. Then will his Joy be great indeed! Without the least allay of Sorrow and Fear, when he shall congratulate his Children upon their safe Arrival in a World of secure and everlasting Felicity.

THUS I have endeavoured to describe the Happiness, which results to a Parent from the Virtue of his Children. From what has been said, the two following Reflections naturally arise. *First*, How highly does it concern Parents, to be diligent in forming the Minds of their Children to the love and practice of Virtue?—*Secondly*, How strongly are Children obliged to excel in Wisdom and Goodness, upon this particular account, because hereby they will greatly promote the Joy of their Parents?

FIRST. How highly does it concern Parents, to be diligent in forming the Minds of their Children to the love and practice of Virtue? This more especially demands the Attention of those persons, whose Children

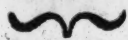
are

are not yet beyond the influence of Education. You see, how much your own Happiness may hereafter depend upon the Manners and Conduct of your Children: And Experience abundantly shews, that the Characters of Men are mostly, as they are educated; if well, *good*; if ill, *evil* and *vicious*. If therefore you neglect your Offspring, and take no care to have their Heads furnished with just Sentiments; and their Hearts principled with good Dispositions; to say the least, you cannot justly expect any great Satisfaction from them: Nay, perhaps, you are nourishing Vipers in your Bosom, which in process of time will sting you to the Heart. On the other hand, if you diligently sow, and cultivate in their Minds, in the Spring of life the seeds of Virtue and useful Knowledge; you may reasonably promise yourself a rich Harvest of noble Joy, if you live, till they arrive at years of Maturity.

THIS Happiness is not to be obtained by only wishing and praying for it: Like most other valuable Enjoyments, it must be purchased with Labour and Solitude. But Hope and Affection, will make your Labour itself pleasant, and your Reward in the end
may

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may be much greater, than I can describe, or you can imagine. While you are improving the Sense and Manners of your Children, you are providing for yourself a Fund of Joy against the Season of life, which is thought to be the most barren of Satisfaction; a Fund of Joy, which will hold out, when other Pleasures fail, and which will be continually growing upon you, as long as your Children are spared to you, and you to your Children. Now is your time; now their Minds are soft and pliable, and may be wrought with ease into their proper Form: a Season, which being once past, will never return; for their Tempers will soon stiffen with Age and Habit, so as not to be capable of much Alteration. Seize therefore your present, your only Opportunity. Guide them by your Counsel: Lead them by your Example into the ways of Wisdom: Observe their prevailing Passions, and endeavour to adapt your Discipline to their different Tempers: Break not their Spirits by excessive Severity; and be cautious of making them peevish and vain by too much Indulgence. When they do well, encourage them with your Praise; when ill, mortify them with your Censure.

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Embrace every favourable Occasion of gratifying their Curiosity, and instilling into them some useful Sentiment. Make it the Business, and you will find it the Pleasure, of your vacant Hours, to assist the dawn of Reason, and instruct them in the rules of Prudence and Virtue. Spare no Expence, your Circumstances will allow, to procure them the best Instructions: For, if you should take something from their Fortunes to improve the advantages of their Education, perhaps neither you, nor they will ever have reason to repent of it.

I MIGHT urge these Duties upon you, from your regard to God, who has committed to your Care these immortal Spirits; from the Obligations, you are under to human Society, which expects, that you endeavour to qualify your Children for usefulness in Life; and from the Love, you bear to your Offspring, whose Happiness mainly depends on your care in their Education. And if I had no more arguments to produce, I hope these would be abundantly sufficient. But when to all these I can add a regard to your own Satisfaction, to your Joy through the whole of life; to your Solace and Support

SERM. port in your declining Years ; you must cer-
 XII. tainly be convinced, that it highly concerns
 you, to use the utmost Care and Diligence
 in educating your Children.

SECONDLY. How strongly are Children obliged to excel in Wisdom and Goodness upon this particular account, because hereby they will greatly promote the Joy of their Parents : Your Father and Mother, next to God, are your greatest Benefactors : Their Care for you begun before your Birth, and has continued ever since without Intermif-
 sion. Nature delivered you into their hands, feeble, naked and defenceless. Had they neglected you in these Circumstances, you had perished immediately through Want and Impotence ; but they readily took upon themselves the Burden of cherishing and defending you, which nothing but the strongest Love and Affection for you could have rendered tolerable. Upon your account, they have denied themselves many Enjoyments : To you, they have sacrificed, in many instances, their own Ease and Pleasures : For you, they have endured much Labour, and felt many an anxious Thought : For you, they have gone through endless Hardships
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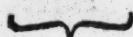
by day and night, with no little hazard of their Health, and even of their Lives. In

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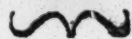
Sickness they attended you ; In Sorrow they comforted you ; and at all times provided for you Food and Raiment suitable to your Condition. All this they did, and did it chearfully for your sake, when you had done nothing for them ; when you knew not as yet your Guardians and Benefactors ; when you did not so much as ask, or thank them for their Favours ; and when they had no Assurance, they should ever receive any Recompence for their Pains.

Thus, with infinite continual Care, they conducted you through a feeble and tedious Infancy : Nor did they yet find an end of their Labours upon your account. The Giddiness of Youth called for daily restraint ; for, being left to itself, it would have carried you to hurt both yourself and others. The Cares, therefore, of your Parents about you, were rather encreased than lessened, as you advanced in Years. Before, they supported you with their Hands ; now, they were to guide you by Counsel and Discipline. It did not content them to promote only the growth of your Body, they also applied them -

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themselves to improve your Mind, and enlarge your Understanding. When you were capable of Learning, they taught you themselves, or procured others to teach you, what they apprehended would be serviceable to you; endeavouring by all means in their power to qualify you for behaving well, and living happily in the world. How much you are obliged to your Parents upon this account, will appear, if you reflect, that whatever Knowledge or Endowments you possess, you derive them from Education; and for your Education you are chiefly indebted to your Parents. Of outward things they enjoy the less themselves, that they may have the more to bestow upon you. They are solicitous to procure for you Friends and Fortunes, that you may continue to live in a secure and comfortable manner, should Heaven deprive you of their Assistance. After all, their Wishes and Prayers go far beyond their Power, and rest in nothing short of your Welfare in this World, and your Happiness for ever.

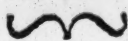
Now, what Returns ought you to make them for all these Benefits? What Pains can you esteem too great, what Labour too difficult



difficult to endure for their sake, who never thought they could do enough for yours? Could I suggest to you any thing in your power, which would be grateful to them, but which you could not accomplish without some Hardship and Loss to yourself, I should flatter myself, you would, as becomes you, embrace the Proposal with great Chearfulness. But, what I would now recommend is of a different Nature: It is something, which you have in your power to perform, which will yield them the highest Satisfaction; and which, at the same time, is most essential to the Pleasure and Comfort of your own Life. It is this, in short; act well, and they will greatly rejoice. You that have good Parents may rest assured, that upon this single Condition, they are ready to acquit you of the immense Debt, which you owe them. Your Wisdom and laudable Conduct, will be a sufficient Recompence in their Estimation for all they have done and suffered upon your account. Like the Father of All, they will be best pleased with you, when you best consult your own Interest, by adhering to the Rules of Virtue and Religion. And even those Services, which

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through human imperfection are most necessary to them, will be principally valued as they are instances of your Gratitude and Goodness.

DENY not therefore, to the best Friends and greatest Benefactors you have upon earth, this dear Satisfaction ; a Satisfaction, which you cannot deny to them, without injuring yourself. Disappoint them not in their fondest Hopes and tenderest Wishes. Let them not have the grievous Mortification to find, that all the Pains they bestowed on your Education were fruitless and vain. Let a regard to their Joy, be an Incentive to your Virtue, and make you earnest to excel in every laudable and worthy Accomplishment.

SUCH is the Influence, which this Consideration has heretofore had upon the noblest Minds. It is related of a brave Roman General, that, whereas others made Glory the end of their Actions ; the end of his Glory was his Mother's Gladness: For the Delight she took to hear him praised, and to see him crowned ; and her weeping for Joy in his Embraces, rendered him in his own opinion, the most honourable and happy man
in

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in the world. In like manner, *Epaminondas* made no scruple to profess, that he esteemed it the greatest Felicity of his whole life, that his Father and Mother still survived to behold his Conduct and Victory in the plains of *Leuctra*.

NOR is this Argument for a virtuous Conduct altogether vanished to you, whose Parents are removed out of this Life. For if they are now no longer the Witnesses of your Actions; yet it will be Pious in you to fulfil their just and reasonable desires. But, if they have any Sense of what passes on Earth, it will add to their Happiness in Heaven itself, to know, that you excel in Wisdom and Virtue. The latter Supposition seems to be countenanced by an excellent *Philosopher* and *Historian*, who represents *CYRUS* the Elder, when at the point of Death, as speaking to his Sons to the following effect.—“ I conjure you, my dear Sons, by
“ all that is sacred, that after my Death you
“ love one another, if you have the least
“ concern to gratify me. You have no rea-
“ son to imagine, that when I am departed
“ out of human Life, I shall cease to be. For
“ even now, you cannot see my *Soul*, only

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" by what it does, you discover its Existence.
 " For my part, I could never believe, that
 " the *Spirit* which lives, while it continues in
 " the *Body*, dies as soon as it is released from
 " it.—The *Body* is now dead in itself; all
 " the Life it enjoys, it owes to the *Soul*:
 " I cannot therefore persuade myself, that
 " the *Soul* can lose her own Sense, by being
 " merely divided from this senseless *Body*.—
 " On the other hand, it seems most proba-
 " ble, that, when she is purified from all
 " corporeal mixture, she will then enjoy a
 " greater Perfection of thought and Reason.
 " When the human Frame is dissolved, you
 " see the other Parts of it return thither,
 " from whence they came: But the *Mind*
 " you see not, neither while it is present,
 " nor when it departs.—If then these things
 " are so, as I am verily persuaded, and the
 " *Soul* continues to live by herself, when
 " separated from the *Body*; Let a Reverence
 " for my *Soul*, though still, as before invi-
 " sible to you, engage you to observe what
 " I now recommend to you with my dying
 " breath."

SOME I suppose will reject this, as a
 groundless Conceit; not considering, that in
 such

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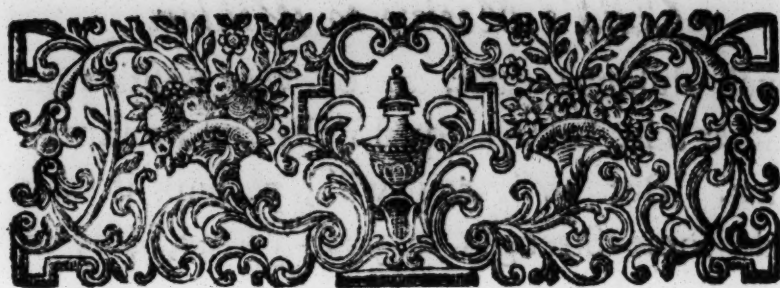
such dubious cases, to be very positive on either side, betrays equal Folly and Presumption. But be it as it will; perhaps it may add some Strength to your Virtue, only to reflect, what Joy it must afford your pious Ancestors, if they look down from Heaven, and observe your wise and worthy Behaviour. This, however, I can pronounce with greater Confidence; That by treading in their steps, and following them in the Paths of Honour and Probity; you will overtake them at last, in a State of pure and perfect Happiness, where you and they shall rejoice together through the Ages of Eternity.



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Henrich's Exposition, v. 2. p. 213-218. XVIII. 15. Story of Dante in
A. 8. 87. in Adventure.



S E R M O N XIII.

Of giving ADVICE and REPROOF.

COLOSSIANS iii. 16. Middle Part.

Teaching and admonishing one another.



IF the moment of any Duty is to be determined, either by its Use in Life, or by its being often inculcated in the Holy Scriptures; that, which is contained in the Words, I have now read, must be allowed to be of peculiar Importance. That this humane Office of *instructing* and *admonishing* our Fellow-Creatures, is frequently recommended by the sacred Authors, every one must know,

Enforce. American v. 2. p. 213-218.

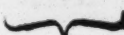
Enforce. IV. 26. answer of the
Fuller's of 1788.

Of giving Advice and Reproof.

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know, that has the least Acquaintance with them. And for any Man to imagine, he has no need of Advice and Instruction, is so far from being an Argument of his Wisdom, that a more certain Proof could not possibly be given of his groundless Conceit and Ignorance of himself. The many Errors into which we are each of us betrayed, and the false Steps we are daily making in the Conduct of Life, ought certainly to convince us, that Advice is not only highly useful, but absolutely necessary. And if we look into the Lives of others, it is wonderful to observe, what gross Faults and extreme Absurdities many commit purely for want of faithful Admonition ; which Considerations, one would think, should dispose every prudent Man to *receive* Advice with Willingness, and every good-natured Man to *give* it with Freedom, whenever it is likely to be serviceable.

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It is the latter of these Duties, namely, that of *giving Advice*, which the Text recommends to us ; the Ground and Extent of which I propose to consider in the *First* place. *Secondly*, I shall offer to you some

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Considerations with respect to the Manner, in which it ought to be performed.

FIRST, We are to consider the Ground and Extent of this Duty of teaching and admonishing one another. And it takes its Rise from the social Frame and common Imperfections of human Nature. GOD having formed us for mutual Aid, and given us different degrees of Prudence ; having also endowed us with Reason and Speech, that we might communicate our Knowledge and Sentiments to each other, has by this means provided, that Wisdom in some, should supply the Want of it in others. Wherefore the same Humanity, which should incline the rich to relieve the poor, requires that such as are rich in Wisdom should assist the indigent with their Instructions and Counsel. Had Providence distributed to all Men equal Portions of Wealth, there had been no room for Charity ; in like manner, Advice would be needless, if all Men had equal shares of Knowledge, and in the same Respects : But the case we see is quite otherwise ; for as we come into the World with very unequal Degrees of Sagacity, so the Opportunities for acquiring Wisdom and Experience, are far

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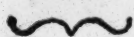
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far more favourable to some than to others. Mankind apply their Understandings to different Subjects, and therefore some are more *knowing* in one respect, some in another; infomuch, that we can scarcely find two Men, in whom the Disparity in point of Prudence is so great, as that the Inferior, if he have but common Sense, shall not be capable of informing and advising the Superior in some particular Affairs.

AND if common Humanity should dispose us to communicate Advice in general to those that want it, the Obligation is still greater between such, as are joined by the Bonds of Friendship. Faithful Counsel, both with regard to Manners and Business, is one of the fairest Fruits and most valuable Advantages of Friendship; which, he that withholds, when there is Occasion for it, but ill sustains the Character of a Friend. If we ought to supply with our Fortune the Necessities of our Friends, much more ought we to assist them liberally with our Prudence: For, as a late Author justly observes, "*The worst Avarice is that of Sense.*" and it is plainly the worst upon these two Accounts; both because we may often do a
more

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more important Service to others in supplying them with Counsel, than with Money; and because by advising them we may do them a substantial Kindness without any Detriment to ourselves, which we cannot in the way of common Liberality. He that serves another with his worldly substance, the more he bestows on him, the less he reserves for his own Use, or the Benefit of others: Wherefore Bounty of this kind spends itself by exhausting the Fountain; but while a Man imparts Wisdom to his Neighbours, he does not in the least diminish his own Stock. He only, as it were, lights up their Candles at his own, which continues to shine with equal Brightness as before.

UPON this account one would be apt to imagine, that of all things Men would not be Niggards of Advice, since by this means they may benefit others without any Loss to themselves. Nevertheless many are very sparing of their Sense under various Pretences. Some will not be at the Trouble of admonishing their Neighbour through want of a proper Concern for his Welfare. They regard his Affairs as of no account to them,
and

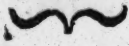
Of giving Advice and Reproof.

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and would not take the Pains even to move SERM.
their Tongues, though they could thereby XIII.
prevent him from pursuing a foolish and
dangerous Conduct. Such betray a Temper
utterly void of all Humanity; which would
teach them to be sensibly affected with the
Concerns of others, and forward to pro-
mote their Interest, especially when they
can do it in so cheap and easy a Way as by
advising and teaching them.

SOME also withhold their Counsel, through
fear of being thought too forward to med-
dle in other mens Affairs. Now, though
it is foolish and impertinent to be always
thrusting in our Advice, when it is neither
desired nor wanted; yet certainly it is no
less blameable, to neglect our Friends, and
be guilty of real Unkindness, in order to
preserve a Character of Modesty. To be
sure we ought, as near as we can, to keep
in the middle Way between neglect and Im-
pertinence; but he, who is guilty of the
latter, seems to err on the right Hand:
For it may often be of bad Consequence to
our Friends, that we forbear Admonition;
whereas good Advice can never directly do
any harm, even when it is most needless.

OTHERS



OTHERS again, are sparing of their Counsel, because, they observe, that often it is ill received and fails of Success: But this should not discourage us from offering our Advice, where, in all probability, it may be useful: Indeed, when there is no reasonable Hope of its producing any good Effect, we may as well save our Labour; but we may frequently meet with those, that will be the better for our Counsel, if it be administered in a friendly and prudent manner. This, however, is certain, that, if we engage in no Undertaking, the Event of which depends in any measure upon the Will of others, till we can be infallibly assured of Success, we shall meet with few Opportunities of serving Mankind and our Friends: We should rather frankly offer them our good Offices at all Hazards, and if through their Perverseness we do not succeed, yet we shall have acquitted ourselves, and the Blame will rest entirely upon them: But if through Indolence or Cowardice, we never attempt to serve them, the Blame will lie at our own door.

LET what has been said suffice, concerning the Obligations we are under to teach
and

Of giving Advice and Reproof.

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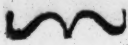
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admonish one another. It now follows, that we enquire into the *Extent* of this Duty; which may relate either to the Persons, to whom, or the Circumstances with regard to which, we are to give our Advice. As to the Persons, the main thing to be considered is, whether or no they are likely to be the better for our Counsel. And *First*, we shall generally find it not so easy to instruct our Superiors in Rank and Fortune, as our Equals and Inferiors. It is not the least Misfortune attending on Greatness, that it usually scorns to be made wiser by those, that are below it: Hence *Solomon* observes, *Eccl. ix. 15, 16.* that though *Wisdom is better than Riches or Strength, yet the poor man's Wisdom is despised, and his Words are not heard*: When a rich Man speaketh, every Man holdeth his tongue, and whatever he saith, they extol it to the Clouds; but if the poor Man speaks, though ever so wisely, they scornfully say—What Fellow is this?—Our Superiors, therefore, cannot justly blame us for withholding our Counsel, if their Pride is such as will not suffer them to reap Advantage by it.

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IT is also easier to instruct such as are younger than yourself, or of equal Age, than those that are older; and to advise Men in other Affairs, than in such as belong to their own Profession. The Reason of which is evident, for in these Cases they know it might reasonably be expected, they should have a better understanding than you, and they will hardly prevail upon themselves to confess the contrary by hearkening to your Counsel: you should therefore chiefly advise Men who do not much exceed you in Age and Fortune; and rather in other things, than in what belongs to their own Profession. Nor should you be forward to admonish those, who have conceived an ill Opinion of you; for whatever you say, they will suspect, you have no good Intention towards them, and be extremely shy of following your Advice.

YET I do not say, these Rules are constantly to be observed: A candid and ingenuous Mind will be disposed to listen to good Advice, let it come from what quarter it will; and pure Charity should incline us to assist our Fellow-Creatures with our Prudence, whenever we have Opportunity, and
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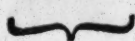
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any tolerable Prospect of doing them Service, we should attend to their Circumstances, and adapt our Counsel to the Necessity of their Affairs. This Duty therefore, branches itself out into a great Variety of Particulars. It implies, that we instruct the ignorant, relieve the perplexed, comfort the afflicted, restrain the insolent, encourage the good, reprove the guilty; and all with a sincere unfeigned Intention to promote their Welfare.

THUS I have finished the *first* thing proposed, which was to enquire into the *Ground* and *Extent* of the Duty recommended in the Text. I proceed now in the *second* place, to lay before you some Observations with respect to the *Manner*, in which it ought to be performed.

IT is a common Complaint, that, as to what relates to private Conduct, Men are seldom the better for Advice: For the most part they receive it with Uneasiness, and are little influenced by it, even when it manifestly points to their own Advantage: Strange Perverseness, you will say, that they should be so backward to pursue their own Interest, merely because they are prompted
to



to it by others. But perhaps we shall be less forward to accuse Mankind of Perverseness, or to wonder, that Advice should be so ill received, if we consider, in what Manner it is commonly given; for though it is bestowed with the Air and Pretence of a Favour, yet often there is something in the case, which makes it look, as if the Giver was to be the only Gainer: That, which we call, *giving Advice*, is usually nothing else, but taking occasion to display our own Wisdom at another's Expence: On the other hand, to be instructed, or to *receive Advice*, on the Terms upon which it is commonly prescribed, is little better, than tamely to afford another the Occasion of raising to himself a Character from our Defects.

IN reality, however able or willing a Man may be to advise, it is no easy matter to make advice a free Gift: For to make a Gift free indeed, there must be nothing in it, which takes from another, to add to ourself: In other Cases, to give, and to dispense, is readily acknowledged for Generosity and good Will; but to *bestow Wisdom*, is to claim a Mastery over us, which we cannot so easily allow. We look upon the Man, who dis-

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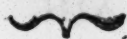
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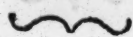
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penfeth it, as offering an Affront to our Understanding, and treating us like Children or Idiots; we confider the Inſtruction as an implicit Censure, and the Zeal, which any one ſhews for our good on ſuch an Occaſion, as a piece of unpardonable Preſumption and Impertinence. The Truth of it is, the Perſon, who pretends to adviſe, does, in that Particular, exerciſe a Superiority over us; and can have no other Reaſon for it, but that in comparing us with himſelf, he thinks he exceeds us in Senſe and Underſtanding: But this is a Pretenſion, we can by no means admit; our Pride remonſtrates againſt it, and will ſeldom ſuffer us, either to accept the Counſel that is offered, or to be well affected towards him who preſumed to offer it.

FROM hence it is evident, that to make Advice acceptable, is really a nice and difficult Affair; and the Art of doing it well conſiſts principally in this, that we do not offend another's Pride by indulging our own: we ſhould lay aſide all ſupercilious Airs, and appear to have no other end in view, but the Benefit of thoſe, to whom we adminiſter Inſtruction. We ſhould be cautious of ſaying any thing, which may either upbraid

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them with their Ignorance, or look like vaunting in our own Wisdom: We should remove ourselves, as much as possible, out of their Sight, and endeavour to insinuate Knowledge into their Minds, without suffering them to perceive, they derived it from us. Hence the Excellence of Fables and Parables; in the latter of which, our Saviour usually conveyed his divine Lessons to his Hearers. In this Method the Mind being busy in applying the Story, and tracing out its Moral, almost forgets, that it is receiving Knowledge from another, and thus becomes insensible of that, which is the most unpleasing Circumstance in Advice; it is taught, as it were, by surprize, and so far overreached, as to imagine, it is all the while advising and teaching itself.

BUT in whatever Way we may administer Counsel to others, we should be careful, that there be nothing in our Manner which may shock their Delicacy, by betraying a Contempt of them, or a high Conceit of our own Wisdom: We should endeavour to appear ourselves as little as possible, and not suffer that little significant word, I, to take up too much room in our Discourse.

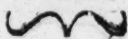
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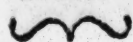
We should not formally declare and repeat what is our Opinion, but rather modestly suggest the Reasons, upon which it is built, and leave them to be considered by those, to whom we offer Advice, without disgusting them by seeming to assume Authority over them.

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And as our Instruction ought to be delivered with Modesty and Simplicity, so it should always be attended with Mildness and good Nature. Anger not only renders us incapable of advising wisely, but also many times weakens our Influence upon those about us, and prevents them from listening to our Advice, however just and beneficial. Would you persuade a Man to do, or not to do something? You will generally find that harsh and passionate Language, is not half so effectual as calm and soft Expressions; by the latter you gain his Consent without losing his Affection: But keen and virulent Words exasperate his Mind against you, and tempt him to reject your Counsel, though ever so good and prudent, by way of Revenge for the ill Nature and Haughtiness, with which you gave it: or if you would make him sensible of a Fault, an affectionate



and mild Admonition will be more likely to affect his Heart, than angry and taunting Reproaches.

THIS indeed is the most difficult part of Advice, when we undertake to shew Mankind their Faults, and endeavour to correct them : in discharging which Duty, we should see to it, that we be governed by pure Kindness for them, and not by a Spirit of Anger and Resentment; that we do not take notice of their Failings in order to set off our own Excellencies ; nor seek to raise our own Character upon the ruins of theirs. Some never admonish their Friends, but in a sneering satyrical manner. These discover a most ungenerous and mean Spirit, while they are more solicitous to display their own Wit than to heal the Disorders of those, they admonish. I do not deny, that to use Satyr is often the most effectual way to mortify Men for their Vices : But the end of Reproof is not to *mortify* Men, but to persuade them to a better and more worthy Behaviour. And this end can seldom be obtained so well by turns of spiteful Wit, as by plain, open, friendly Counsel.

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WE should be cautious, not to make ourselves intolerable to our Friends, by being severe upon them for trifling Faults; nor lose our Influence upon them, and harden them against our Admonitions, by teizing them, with continual Complaints. I add, *Lastly*, When we admonish a Friend, we should do it in private: For it would ill become us to expose his Character, while we are pretending to shew a Concern for his Virtue and Benefit.—A great Man having once taken Occasion to reprove a Friend before others, and being immediately told by one of the Company, that he ought rather to have done it in a private Manner; Yes, replied he, I acknowledge I ought; and in the same Manner ought not you to have censured me for it? Indeed, if we reprove a Man before others, he may be more sensibly touched with Shame; but we ought to save him this Pain, at least, till we have tried, what may be done by private Admonition. This is agreeable to our SAVIOUR'S Direction. *Matt. xviii. 15. If thy Brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him of his Fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother.*

SERM. *But if he will not bear thee, then take with*
 XIII. *thee one or two more ; and if he shall neglect*
 { *to hear them, tell it unto the Church.*

THUS we have finished what was proposed from the Words ; having considered the Ground and Extent of the Duty recommended, and the Manner in which it ought to be performed : The Sum of what has been said is this, That we should be ready to instruct and admonish our Fellow-Creatures, out of a sincere Desire to do them Service ; and that we should endeavour to do it, in such a Manner, as may convince them, that, not our own Interest, nor the Gratification of our Pride and Passion, but their Benefit alone is really the End of our Instruction.

I SHALL now conclude this Discourse with exhorting you to consider well the Value of Things, and carefully to compare the Importance of the several Duties of Life. Wisdom and Goodness are certainly the fairest and most valuable Possessions, and far preferable to outward Enjoyments : The former are the Ornaments and Perfections of the Soul ; the latter can only be subservient to the Wants of this despicable and perishing

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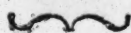
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Body. Riches and all outward Things are continually obnoxious to Fortune, and at best will forsake us, when we come to die: But Wisdom cannot be taken away from us, is not liable to be lost by any Accidents, and will attend us through all Changes of Life or Being. *Prov. iii. 14—18. The Merchandize therefore of Wisdom, is better than the Merchandize of Silver; and the Gain thereof, than fine Gold: She is more precious than Rubies, and all the Things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her. Length of Days is in her Right-hand, and in her Left-hand Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace: She is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one, that retaineth her.* In reality, as Vice, Folly, and Discontent are the worst Evils, so a sound Mind, Tranquility, and Goodness, are the best Enjoyments of human Life. If any Man therefore by his Counsel, promotes the Prudence, Chearfulness and Virtue of his Fellow-Creatures, he actually does them a more important Service, than if he added ever so much to their Dignity and Fortune. He, that guides Men to the right Manage-

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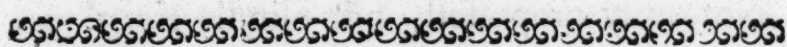
ment of their Temporal Affairs, undoubtedly deserves their Gratitude and Respect: But he, that is able and willing to instruct them in their spiritual Concerns, so as to correct their Vices, and refine their Manners; so as to make them happy in themselves, useful in Society, and acceptable to GOD: In a Word, so as to fit them both for living and dying well; such an one is a truly *Divine Man*; and what ever Treatment he meets with in the World, merits from Mankind the highest Regards.—Such was *Socrates* among the Heathens: Such, in the most eminent Degree, was our blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST—And such let us endeavour to be according to our poor Ability, which we should study to enlarge, by advancing continually in useful Knowledge.





S E R M O N XIV.

Of receiving ADVICE and REPROOF.



Isaiah XLVII. 1.

Amos V. 10.

PROVERBS. XV. 32.

He that refuseth Instruction, despiseth his own Soul; but he that beareth Reproof, getteth Understanding.



HAVING shewn in my last Discourse, how Advice should be given; I propose now to enquire with what Temper, and in what Manner it ought to be received. And perhaps this is a point, no less worthy of our Consideration than the former; for, if there are many, who err in their Method of Teaching, there are, I doubt, as many, who are equally

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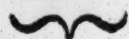
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equally unqualified for *Learning*, as they ought.— The *Poet* asketh, complaining as it were of the Scarcity of good Instructors ;

— Where's the Man, who Counsel can bestow,

Still pleas'd to *teach*, and yet not proud to *know*?

Unbias'd, or by Favour, or by spite,
Not dully prepossess'd, nor blindly right.

Tho' learn'd, well bred ; and tho' well-bred,
sincere ;

Modestly bold, and humanly severe ?

Who to a Friend his Faults can freely show.—

In like Manner may we not ask with equal Reason ; Where's the Man, that is not too vain to *Learn* ? That is sensible of the Value of Wisdom and his own Defects, and thinks he needs to be admonish'd and instructed : that esteems it no lessening to him to receive Advice, and can bear to be told of his Faults, without Dislike to such as reprove him out of pure Kindness.

It seems we are all so full of Knowledge, at least in our own Opinion, that we have no room for any Supply, and might even
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be in danger of suffering by an Overcharge, if we did not contrive to give it Vent, and kindly dispense it among our Neighbours. SERM.
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The Misfortune is, we can seldom meet with Persons, that are disposed to accept this kind of Charity, as a Favour. Few have attained to that high Point of Wisdom, which consists in the Knowledge of their own Ignorance; and fewer still, who, sensible of their Defects, are willing to confess them by opening and bending their Ears to Instruction. We can hardly bear to think, much less to acknowledge, that the Understanding of another is better than our own. Or if we can bring ourselves to make such a Confession with respect to other Subjects, as in Matters of Art, Trade and speculative Science; yet in Cases where Life, Manners and Religion are concerned, who can endure to own himself, or be thought by others, an Inferior in Wisdom?

HENCE, while we are generally active enough with our Tongues, we make but little Use of our Ears, which were designed by Nature for Avenues, through which the Soul should receive Instruction from others. We all set up for Masters,
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loving to teach, disdaining to be taught : because the former is an Employment, that soothes our Vanity, as much as the latter disgusts it. The same Pride, which makes us give Advice with so ill a Grace, is also the Cause of our admitting it with so much Reluctance. The first Step, therefore, to our profiting by Instruction, is to get clear of Conceit, by descending into our own Minds, and observing well how scantily they are furnished : by attending to the Narrowness and Imperfection of our Faculties : by reviewing our past Errors, and the Slips and Failings, into which they have betrayed us : By considering moreover how prejudicial this Vanity is to our Minds, while it reconciles us to our Ignorance, and prevents us from making any Improvement in Wisdom and Knowledge.

IF by these Means we can divest ourselves of Conceit in any tolerable Measure, and attain to a modest Opinion of our own Understanding and Sense, we shall be disposed to receive Instruction willingly, when it is offered, or to ask for it, when it is not offered. Not that we are obliged to lend our Ears to every Fool, whose Vanity may prompt him

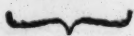
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him to obtrude his Counsel upon us : For thus we should both waste our Time to no valuable purpose, and do him an Injury by encouraging his Impertinence. But we should principally attend to them, whose Advice is most likely to be serviceable to us. And since the Modesty, which cleaves to good Sense, is apt to prevent wise Men from communicating Knowledge of their own accord, we should invite them to it by appearing desirous of their Instruction : for certainly we ought to esteem it an easy Purchase, when we can gain Wisdom by only asking for it.

BUT we should carefully consider the Qualifications of those, we consult ; as whether they are well affected towards us, and able to assist us with good Counsel. If we apply to others besides our Friends, we cannot be assured they will give us useful Advice, though they may be able to do it. Or if we consult those, who are really our Friends in Affairs, which they do not well understand, they may lead us wrong without designing it. We should therefore seek for such to instruct us, in whom Ability is joined with a Concern for our Welfare.

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AND whether a Friend offers us his Counsel unasked, or bestows it in Compliance with our Desire, we ought to yield him a diligent and careful Attention: As a dull and indifferent Hearer discourages the Speaker, so an attentive one enlivens him, and gives him Spirit in delivering his Sentiments: We should therefore turn our Eyes towards him, with a serious and composed Countenance, bearing on it Marks of Satisfaction, that we may engage him to proceed, and declare his Thoughts fully and freely; expressing no Signs of Contempt and displeasure, nor of a Mind employed about other Cares and Business, but wholly intent upon listening to his Discourse. During the Time he speaks, we should give up our Thoughts entirely to him, endeavouring to comprehend all his Meaning, and solicitous, that nothing useful may escape us: We should remember that our own Interest is principally concerned, as the Advantage is our own, if we grow wiser by Advice; so if through our Negligence good Instruction is lost upon us, we ourselves are the greatest Sufferers.

THOUGH in one Sense our Ears are always open, yet to keep them open so as to be in
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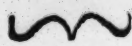
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a proper Disposition for receiving Instruction requires no small Pains. There seems to be something of Art in the case, which many Persons want to learn. Indeed most Men have Attention enough to bestow upon Trifles, but none, when Things of Moment are offered to their Consideration: Give them an account of a Dream or a Feast, they will hang silently upon your Lips, and wait with Joy, while you go on with the important Relation: But if any one attempt to instruct them in their Duty, or reprove them for a Fault, or mitigate their Passion, they cannot hear him with tolerable Patience; they either passionately interrupt him with Objections, if they can find any thing plausible to say; or leave him, to go where they can be entertained with their beloved Trifles, filling their Ears, like faulty Vessels, with any thing rather than what is valuable and useful.

BUT it were happy for us, if we could learn to proportion our Attention to the Importance of the Subject, and to esteem those Subjects of highest Moment, which immediately relate to our Temper and Conduct: Perhaps too it would become us as well,
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if we were less eager to speak, and more patient to hear. Silence is often commendable, and never more so, than when another is taking pains to instruct us: For our own sake, as well as out of good Manners to him, we should not interrupt him, nor force him to stop in the middle of his Discourse. Though we may not thoroughly approve his Sentiments, we should hear him out, and wait till he has made an end of speaking; and even then, we should not be too hasty in contradicting him; but give him Time, if he thinks fit, to add something, or retract or change what he had before asserted. It is the height of Rudeness and Indecency to fall foul upon each other in Conversation, and speak to those, who are yet speaking, neither hearing others, nor being heard by them. Thus both the Benefit and Pleasure of conversing together is entirely destroyed: Whereas he that is accustomed to hear with Modesty and Forbearance, observes and retains useful Sentiments, easily discerns what is unprofitable and false, and in the meantime approves himself a Lover of Truth, and not of Contention.

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MOREOVER, we should not be hard to please, with respect to the *manner* in which Instruction is administered. For there are some, who making Pleasure the chief End of hearing, contract a certain Squeamishness of Taste, which is highly prejudicial to them. They scorn Truth, when she appears in that plain simple Habit, she loves to wear; and can see no Charms in her, when not distinguished by those glaring Ornaments, which are as often employed to recommend Falshood: But let us guard against this childish Delicacy, and cultivate a Disposition to embrace good Sense, though it should happen to be cloathed in homely Expressions. When we give Instruction, we may endeavour to make it as agreeable as we can, that the Grace which attends, may help it to gain a more easy Admittance. But as in taking Physic we should consult our Health, and not the Gratification of our Palate; so in receiving Advice we should mainly regard the Health and Improvement of our Understanding; and provided this End be answered, we should be little concerned, whether in the meantime our Fancy be indulged or not. We

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should imitate the Bee, which alights indeed upon all sorts of Flowers, but often passeth by the most beautiful, to pitch upon those, that make the meanest and most despicable Appearance; and extracting from them the precious Honey, returns to her Work. In like Manner a well-disposed and judicious Hearer, leaving those, that are struck with fine Language and florid Expressions, to entertain themselves with mere Words, endeavours to penetrate into the Intention of the Speaker, and the Sense of the discourse; that from thence he may draw whatever will be useful and profitable to himself.

NOR is it material, with regard to the Influence it should have upon us, with what Temper, or by what Persons Instruction is delivered. If it proceed from Good Nature and Friendship, we should be grateful to the Giver; but unless it appears to be wise and just, we ought not to follow it: If on the contrary, it be reasonable and just, we are not the less obliged to follow it, because it was given with a bad Disposition. Does any Man instruct me from a Principle of Vanity? Let him answer for his own Pride: It is my Business to grow wiser, if I can,
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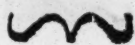
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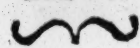
by attending to the Counsel it prompts him to suggest. Does he give himself haughty and supercilious Airs? The Airs, he puts on, can neither make his Counsel better nor worse to me, if I do but resolve to consider it fairly. Does he reprove me to set off his own Character? And may I not reap Benefit from hence by studying to excel him? Does one, that is below me, or younger than me, take upon him to teach me? And what Harm can it do me, if I gain a little Knowledge, though it come from my Inferior in Age and Fortune?

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AND as the *Quality* of the Speaker ought not to prejudice our Minds against his Advice, so neither should we suffer ourselves to be subdued by his Authority. How high an Opinion soever we may entertain of his Honesty and Prudence, we ought not to be determined by his bare Assertion, but by the Reasons alone, which he offers in Support of his Judgment: To these we should carefully attend, and examine them with Strictness and Impartiality: And if upon Enquiry we find them not to be of sufficient Weight, we may justly reject the Counsel, that was given us, though it proceeded from



the best and wisest Man upon Earth: But if the Arguments appear to be just and conclusive, we should yield up ourselves willingly to them.

AND here it concerns us to guard with equal Caution against two opposite Vices, I mean *Weakness* and *Obstinacy*. Some Men will not be at the Pains to exercise their own Judgment, but blindly submit to the Guidance of others: Give them Counsel, and they will readily follow it; but then it is just as a Beast observes your Orders, without Understanding for what Purpose and upon what Account you gave them. Hence if any Man thinks it worth his while to lead them, they will stupidly follow him, though it be to their own Disadvantage and Shame. If such Persons do not miscarry, they have reason to be thankful, that they happened to meet with honest Guides, who scorned to abuse their Easiness and Credulity.

As a weak Man is a Slave to the Humour of others, so an obstinate Man is a Slave to his own. In vain do you offer him good Counsel; in vain do you support your Opinion with the best Arguments: Firmly per-

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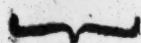
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persuaded of his own Sufficiency, he scorns Advice, which he imagins to be needless; and will never depart from any Opinion, he has once espoused, because he looks upon his own Judgment as always infallible. This he esteems a laudable Steadiness; whereas no Steadiness is truly commendable, but that, which consists in adhearing constantly to Truth, as well when others assist us in finding it, as when we discover it by our own Sagacity.

These are the Extremes we should be cautious to avoid; neither slavishly submitting to *any* Man's Authority, nor perversly rejecting useful Advice. Upon the Whole, we ought always to follow our own best Judgment; but conscious, that our Judgments are ever liable to err, we should be glad to have them assisted by the Sentiments and Reason of others. Let none of us then be ashamed of being taught; for though it is an Argument of Imperfection, that we need to *learn*; yet this is an Imperfection, from which no Mortal is free. And it will be a much greater and more shameful Weakness, if, when we have need of Instruction,

SERM. our own Conceit will not suffer us to embrace it.
XIV.



THUS we have shewn, after what Manner Advice in general ought to be received; but as *Solomon* seems in the Text to have intended principally that Part of Advice, which we call *Reproof*, it may not be amiss to consider it distinctly. It is an Observation, not more common than true, that for the most part we are blind to our own Errors, and have a strange Faculty at overlooking our own Faults, which of all things in the World it most concerns us to observe. We should therefore esteem it no small Favour, as it may be of great Advantage to us, if our Friends will assist us to open our Eyes upon our Follies, and warn us of their Deformity and bad Effects. At least we should hear them with Patience and Attention, and express no Signs of Displeasure towards them which might discourage them from speaking their Mind fully and freely. Upon such Occasions it would ill become us to carry it with an Air of Indifference and Levity, as in Affairs, which we do not regard as of serious Importance to us. There is more Hopes of one, that is anger'd by
Ad-

Of receiving Advice and Reproof. 279

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XIV.

Admonition, than of him, that makes a Jest of it, in as much as the former owns, he is touched; whereas he, that laughs at Reproof, declares, he despiseth it. But though this is more Faulty, yet both are blameable. For on the other hand, we should not indulge and betray that kind of Uneasiness, which might seem to intimate, that we do not relish the Subject of Discourse, and should be better pleased if it were dropped and dismissed.

AND though he, who reproves, ought to do it in the most affectionate and agreeable Manner, yet we should endeavour to reap Advantage by Reproof, even when it is attended with Rudeness and ill Nature. It is the Monitor's fault, if he does not discharge his Office in the best Manner; but it is our Fault, if we are not disposed to profit by his Admonitions, however they are administered. Instead of searching for plausible Excuses, and defending ourselves with hasty Passion, we should calmly and impartially examine, whether we may not have deserved some Blame: If upon a fair Enquiry we are fully satisfied of our Innocence, we have good Reason to rejoice in it,



but none to be displeased with our Friend for reproving us: But if our Hearts, in any Degree justifying the Censure, begin to burn with Shame and Conviction, we should indulge and cherish the generous Passion, esteeming it far more honourable and manly to acknowledge a Fault, of which we are conscious, than to persist obstinately in our own Vindication.

BUT perhaps our Friends, blinded by their Affection for us, may not discern our Failings; or they may dissemble the Faults, they see, fearing to disturb and offend us, should they remind us of them. In these Cases we should endeavour to supply the Want of their Admonitions, by listening attentively to the Reflections of our Enemies, agreeable to the *Poet's* Direction——

Trust not thyself; but thy Defects to know,
Make use of ev'ry Friend and ev'ry Foe——

He, that would be delivered from his Vices, had need to have either faithful Friends, or bitter Enemies; the former to correct him by their kind Admonitions, or the latter by their spiteful Reproaches. But since
Friend-

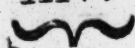
Of receiving Advice and Reproof. 281

Friendship now-a-days is grown dumb, as to Reproof, and can speak only in Flattery and Compliment, we must hear the Truth, if at all, from our Enemies: These will have a strict Eye upon our Conduct, and curiously watch our Slips and Failings; nor need we fear lest they should be unwilling to mention them out of an unseasonable Tendernefs: Let us therefore attend to the worst they say of us, regarding not so much the Dispositions of the Speakers, as the Crimes they lay to our Charge.

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XIV.

A MAN, we are told, striking at another with a Design to kill him, opened with his Sword an Impostume, that was thought incurable, and fortunately saved the Life he aimed to have destroyed. In like Manner a Reproach, darted by a malicious Tongue, may be the Occasion of curing some fatal Disorder of the Mind, which had otherwise been neglected. The Misfortune is, that commonly we do not consider so much, whether we are guilty of the Fault objected against us, as how we may be revenged on our Enemy by retorting the Censure; and are more sollicitous to fix a Blot upon his

Cha-



Character, than to purify our own Mind from its Blemishes and Stains.

BUT when we are upbraided by an Enemy with any Crime, we ought calmly to ask and answer ourselves, whether the Accusation is True? If so, we should apply ourselves immediately to remove the Ground of it: And if we are satisfied, it is false, we should enquire nevertheless, from whence it arose, fearful lest we may have inadvertently committed some Fault resembling that, which is laid to our Charge. For instance, are you accused of Wantonness? Though it may be you are conscious of nothing very Criminal, yet possibly you have indulged yourself in some Airs and Freedoms, which are not altogether decent and unblameable. Or if you are reproached with Intemperance, it may be, you can truly deny, that ever you were guilty of a Debauch; but perhaps at the same time you cannot deny, that you have gone too much into loose Company. When therefore your Enemies cast upon you an unjust Reflection, you should not immediately despise and neglect it, because it is false; but consider, what you have said or done, that might give

a Co-

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a Colour to such an Accusation, and cautiously avoid the like suspicious Conduct for the future. Thus you may often derive Wisdom of no small Value from your Enemies, which you would neither have found yourself, nor been taught by your Friends.

BUT though the good or bad Temper of those, that reprove us, ought to make no Difference in the Regard we pay to the Advice itself, yet it should make a wide Difference in our Respect to the Persons, who bestow it. If any Man gives us the best Counsel without a real Intention to serve us, it is manifest, we owe him no Thanks for his Labour. But, whoever will be at the Pains of admonishing and teaching us, animated with Zeal and Concern for our Welfare, deserves our good Will and Gratitude, at least. Nor should we be forward to suspect our Instructors of selfish and mean Views. It is equally the Part of a generous and candid Mind, to put the best Construction it will bear upon the Conduct of others; and to love those, that with upright Intention, though joined perhaps with but moderate



moderate Abilities, attempt to make it wiser and better.

THUS I have endeavoured to describe the Arts both of teaching and Learning. Having considered in my *last* Discourse, how *Advice should be given*; and in *this*, with *what Temper*, and in *what Manner it ought to be received*. I conclude with praying, that God would assist us to apply that Reason, with which he has honoured us, to his Glory, and the Benefit of ourselves and others; using our Tongues, as Instruments of *Communicating*, and our Ears of *Admitting* profitable Instruction.





S E R M O N X V .

The FOLLY and DANGER of abusing
the PATIENCE of GOD.



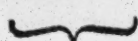
ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

*Because Sentence against an evil Work
is not executed speedily ; therefore
the Heart of the Sons of Men is
fully set in them to do Evil.*



I T would perhaps bear disputing,
whether Sentence against an evil
Work is not, in some Measure,
executed speedily. It may be
alleged on one Side, that the Sense of
Guilt, which haunts the Breast of a wicked
Man

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XV.



Man, is extremely painful and tormenting; so as to justify the Poet's Observation, that it is *Punishment enough to be a Villain*. Misery does not follow Vice at a Distance, but cleaves to it, and attends it continually. God has joined them so firmly together, that they scarce can be divided by any Art. Do you think, he that has committed a foul Crime, does not begin to suffer, till he enters the Prison, or mounts the Ladder? He is in Agonies even then, when no mortal but himself, is privy to his Wickedness. His Conscience, which begun to scourge him in Secret, as soon as he had finished the base Act, continues to lash him incessantly with cruel Stripes. His Condition, therefore, is already so bad, that was there no future State, Death would be a great Blessing to him; since the Continuance of Life would only draw out and prolong his Misery.

GUILT is not only disquieting in itself, but also gives rise to a Variety of evil Passions, that vex the Soul and destroy its Peace. The Boldness and Confidence, with which Men sometimes engage in a Crime, forsake them, when it is over, and leave them to sink under a thousand Terrors and dismal

Appre-

abusing the Patience of God.

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XV.

Apprehensions. They have enjoyed the Bait; the Pleasure is gone; but the Sting remains. The View of the Past fills them with Remorse! of the Present, with Jealousy and Distrust; of the Future, with endless Tears and Suspicions. Upon these accounts, one would be ready to think, that Vice makes itself miserable enough, though neither God nor Man were to lay any additional Punishment upon it.

YET perhaps we shall not be so thoroughly satisfied with the Conclusion, if we consider, how far the vilest Wretches frequently are from shewing any Signs of present Misery. On the other hand, don't they often seem perfectly contented, nay, joyful and happy? Don't they carry an Appearance of Cheerfulness, which many want, that are much better than themselves? We may say, indeed, that this is only a Disguise to cover the inward Distractions of a guilty Mind. Yet I know not whether we have always sufficient Ground for such Presumptions. It is certain, were they in fact happy, they could not give better Proofs of their being so, than what they actually do give. What Reason have we then to question it? The
Truth

SERM. Truth is, when first Men venture upon
 XV. Vice, Conscience plagues them grievously;
 ~~~~~ but when they have practised it a while,  
 they many times lose their Feeling, and for  
 any thing Conscience can do, may go on  
 without meeting at present with much Dis-  
 turbance. Their Minds harden by degrees,  
 and at last become incapable of Remorse,  
 and of all the Tears, it usually excites. Hence  
 in the case of the worst of Men, it should  
 seem no great Punishment to be a Villain.  
 For through the Perfection of their Wick-  
 edness, they often escape the Miseries, which  
 naturally spring from Vice, and of which  
 others are more sensible, who have not  
 arrived to such a Height of Impiety. God  
 has therefore provided other Punishments  
 for Sinners; but because these Punishments  
 are not speedily inflicted, the Hearts of the  
 Sons of Men are fully set in them to do  
 Evil.

IN discoursing from these Words, I would  
 FIRST illustrate what is asserted in the Text,  
 that *because Sentence against an evil Work*  
*is not executed speedily; therefore the Heart*  
*of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to*  
*do Evil.* SECONDLY, vindicate the Pro-  
 vidence

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XV.

vidence of God in delaying the Punishment of Sinners, though by this Means they are confirmed in Wickedness. And LASTLY, expose the Folly of such as grow more presumptuous and hardened in Sin, because Sentence against it is not immediately executed.

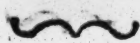
FIRST, I am to illustrate the Assertion of my Text, that *because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily; therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil.* It is not in the Nature of Man knowingly to run upon his own Destruction; so that if he lived under a steady Conviction, that Sin is closely connected with Misery, to escape the one, he would avoid the other. Now no Man could doubt of this, if he saw the Crimes of others always immediately followed by some evident Calamity; or if, whenever he himself was guilty of Injustice, some heavy Judgment fell instantly upon him. But many, when they observe on the other hand the faithless and perjured, the unjust and cruel, not only free from any grievous Affliction, but also crowned with Success and Prosperity; when besides, they find themselves

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easy



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XV.

easy and well after having practised the Arts of Iniquity, they are emboldened in Wick- edness, and even calmly resolved to persist in it. The Silence of Heaven, when Earth abounds with horrid Crimes, encourages them to cast off the Bonds of Religion and the Fear of God. They conclude from hence, either that there is no Providence governing the World, or if there be, that it will always suffer them to escape with Impunity, as it does at present. Thus do Sinners turn the Delay of divine Punish- ments into an Argument, that they shall never be inflicted.

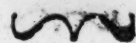
WITH regard to temporal Corrections, it is plain, they must, in a great Measure, lose their Efficacy, by being long delayed. In this case, the Sinner perceiving no Con- nection between the Crime and the Evil, esteems it a Misfortune rather than a Pu- nishment; and therefore, though he groans under the Calamities that befall him, yet he repenteth not of his Sins, which he does not regard as the Cause of his Suffer- ings. Were he immediately scourged upon every Act of Disobedience, he would be- come in time considerate and humble, and  
fearful

*abusing the Patience of God.*

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fearful of God, as the present Avenger of human Wickedness. But when Justice follows him slowly, and does not reach him, 'till, it may be, he has almost forgot the Offence; he ascribes the Affliction to Chance, and not to the divine Resentment of his Guilt. Wherefore his Punishment leaves him under no more Awe of the divine Being, in no better Disposition to forsake his Sins, than he was before it.

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XV.



As to those Punishments, that are deferred beyond the Term of this Life, they appear to Sinners so very distant, that they make but little Impression upon them. Nay, I doubt, they often distrust the Reality of a future Retribution; for when they perceive, that in many Instances Guilt is not Punished by the divine Providence in this World, they are too apt to conceive Hopes, that God will use it hereafter with the like Indulgence. Or if they are verily persuaded, that he will inflict unspeakable Misery upon the Wicked in a future State; yet Death appearing always to be a great Way off, and their Thoughts, in the mean time, being engaged about worldly Enjoyments, they are little concerned to avoid those Evils, that

SERM. are seemingly removed so far from them.  
 XV. In short, it is this, and no other Consideration, by which Men encourage and confirm themselves in evil Courses, that the Fruits of Sin are at hand, and ready to be gathered; whereas the Punishment of it is long delayed, and comes not of a great while after the Enjoyment.

I PROCEED NOW to the SECOND thing proposed; which was to vindicate the Providence of God, in delaying the Punishment of evil Men. For since by this means they are often confirmed in Vice, it may be asked, Why does God trifle with them, and spare his Thunder? He is continually present with the Worker of Iniquity; he is Witness to all their Crimes; and he is armed with Almighty Power, which enables him to execute Vengeance with Ease, whenever he pleaseth. Why then does he forbear to punish, and thereby suffer them to become more mischievous in the World, more bold in Impiety? Such Objections have frequently been urged against the divine Government. But how frivolous and weak they are, will plainly appear, if it be considered, that the Forbearance of God, which  
 Men



*abusing the Patience of God.*

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Men sometimes abuse to their own Destruction, answers many good and valuable Purposes.

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FOR, FIRST, he delays to execute Sentence upon Offenders, proposing himself as an Example to Men, not to be overhasty and rash in punishing. We cannot possibly derive any greater Advantage from God, than that we should attain the Habits of Virtue, by imitating the excellent Perfections of his Nature. When therefore he defers for a time the Punishment of Sinners, it is not, that he fears, lest he should do any thing in haste, of which he might afterwards have cause to repent, but in order to correct our Severity and Vehemence with regard to the faults of our fellow-creatures; teaching us, that we should not fall furiously upon those, that have provoked us, while our minds are yet inflamed and blinded with Passion; but, that in imitation of his Forbearance, we should suspend the Execution of Punishment, 'till we have taken time to examine things with Accuracy and Calmness; and that then only at last we should have recourse to Justice; when after due Consideration our Reason informs us that it is right and

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necessary.

SERM.  
XV.

necessary. Our Saviour has instructed us to make this use of the divine Forbearance and Mercy, Luk. vi. 35, 36. *Love your Enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the Children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil; be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

To hear of human Examples, promotes in us a mild and forbearing Temper; as when we are told of one, that having lifted up his Staff to strike a person, that had provoked him, stood holding it in that posture, punishing, as he expressed it, his own Anger. And of another, who, finding himself angry at his Servants, left them immediately, only saying, as he went away, it is well for you, that I am now in a passion; for otherwise I should have beaten you. Now, if to reflect upon the Actions and Sayings of Men abates the Vehemence and Fierceness of Passion, much more must it produce the like effect, to consider, that God is slow in punishing, though he is subject to neither Fear nor Repentance. How can we choose but regard Mildness and Long suffering

*abusing the Patience of God.*

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suffering as an admirable part of Virtue, when we see it displayed before us, in the character of the greatest and best of Beings, who, if he reforms few by punishing speedily, corrects and improves many, by the Example of his Patience.

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XV.



IN the SECOND place, God sometimes delays the Execution of Punishment, that he may afford Sinners Space for Repentance. Human-Governors differ widely from God, both in their Intention, and method of Proceeding. The former purpose not so much to *cure Vice*, as to prevent it from *breaking out to the Detriment of Society*; and since they cannot foresee, whether Sinners would reform or not, if they were spared, they endeavour to make sure work, by letting Vengeance immediately loose upon Offenders: But God, when a Soul is disordered with Sin, clearly perceives all its affections, and knows beforehand what is impossible for Man to know, whether it would recover and amend, if time were allowed it. He does not therefore hasten alike the Punishment of all; but as he sometimes cuts off the incorrigible, that they may not hurt others, and most of all themselves, by continuing and improving





in Wickedness, so he bears with those, who, he sees, in time will return to the Practice of Virtue.

HAD you seen Paul persecuting the Christians with flaming zeal, hunting them from place to place, stirring up the Magistrates against them, and even assisting himself at their Executions; you perhaps would have been impatient, that God should have destroyed this bitter and Cruel enemy of his Church. But he whose Wisdom is infinite, thought otherwise. He foresaw, that this same Paul would afterwards become an eminent Defender, a zealous and successful Preacher of that Gospel, which he was then opposing with all his Might, and by the most inhuman Methods: Wherefore he did not cut him off, while he was engaged in the horrid Crime of Persecution; because he had thereby deprived the Church of a glorious Apostle.

WERE Sentence always to be executed suddenly, some doubtless would have been less wicked, than they are, but then many, we have reason to believe, would have been hurried into Hell, who, as things are now ordered, arrive in Heaven. How frequent  
are

*abusing the Patience of God.*

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XV.

are the Instances, wherein, through the divine Forbearance, Men change their Lives and Manners for the better? How many that are wild and licentious in Youth, disappoint the Fears of their Friends, and prove in after Life Examples of Virtue? The noblest Natures, it should seem, are capable of nothing indifferent, but produce either great Vices or eminent Virtues. The former often prevail amidst the tumults of Youth. But when the Temper is a little composed with Age, the Virtues happily shoot forth and flourish. As therefore a Person of no Skill in Husbandry would esteem that Ground of small value, which throws out abundance of rank weeds; whereas one, that understands the Art, regards it as the Evidence of a Soil naturally rich and fertile: In like manner, we being offended with the Disorders and Follies, that spring up at first in generous Spirits, are apt to think, they ought to be immediately destroyed and rejected; but God, who is a better Judge of these things, waits 'till their Minds being improved and settled with Age, produce the admirable Fruits of Virtue. Thus to use the Apostles Words, 2 Peter iii. 9. *He is long suffering*

SERM.

XV.

*fering towards us, because he is not willing, that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance.*

BUT you say, many are spared for a considerable time, that grow worse and worse, as long as they Live. Why then did not God rather speedily punish them, since he could not but know they would abuse his Patience? In answer to this I would remind you of a Law, which has prevailed in other Nations, as well as our own. If a woman, that is pregnant, be condemned to die, her Punishment is suspended 'till after her Delivery. Now is it not equally just, that God should confine Sinners in life, upon Account of some Benefit which human Society may receive from them? Suppose they are pregnant with some salutary Council; what if they can make important Discoveries? or invent some useful and necessary Art? what if their Vices themselves, would lead them to such Actions, as would finally tend to the welfare of Mankind? In such cases, were it not better to delay their Punishment awhile, than to prevent their Usefulness, by inflicting it more speedily? A wicked Parent may have an excellent Child; and where is the

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*abusing the Patience of God.*

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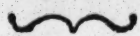
SERM.

XV.

the harm if God forbears to destroy an evil root for the sake of a noble branch, that is to spring from it? Had a late arbitrary Monarch, I mean *King James the Second*, died in his Youth, it is true the Nation had never groaned under the Yoke of his Tyranny; but then we had lost in his Loins one of the best of Queens; perhaps too, we had never enjoyed the inestimable Advantages we derive from the Revolution.

TYRANTS and Oppressors, while they are suffered to remain in life, are subservient to the divine Will, and made to fill up some useful part in the unblameable Order of Providence. God sometimes employs them as Executioners in scourging and punishing one another, sometimes in correcting the Good, and giving them occasion to exert their Virtues. Upon the whole then, let us cease to arraign the Justice of Heaven, and forbear to indulge presumptuous Complaints. It will certainly become us better, to praise that Patience, by which we ourselves are spared; and to applaud the divine long suffering, which answers so many wise and good Purposes.

THUS



THUS I have endeavoured to vindicate the Providence of God in delaying the Punishment of Sinners, though by this Means they are sometimes confirmed in Wickedness. It remains LASTLY, that we consider the Folly of such as encourage themselves in Sin, because Sentence against it, is not immediately executed.

AND the extreme Folly of such is plain from hence, that the Punishment, which is deferred for a time, will most certainly be inflicted at last upon all that persist in Impiety. If wicked Men should finally escape, it must be upon one of these two Accounts, either because *God cannot*, or because he *will not* punish them. But that *he cannot*, the most stupid Sinner dares not flatter himself; for he is armed with almighty and irresistible Power, and does what pleases him, both in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of Earth. Man may be unable, upon several accounts, to execute Judgment upon the guilty. They may conceal themselves or their Crimes from him, they may fly beyond his Reach, they may be sheltered from the Vengeance of one by the Protection of another; or Death may divide the

Judge

*abusing the Patience of God.*

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Judge from the Criminal, and thus prevent the Execution of Justice. But by none of these ways can Sinners baffle the Power of God. They can neither remove out of his Presence, nor be hid from his Notice; nor can any Being defend them against him. All Souls are in his hand, whether living or dying, and their Condition depends entirely upon his Pleasure. SERM.  
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AND therefore, if he does not in the end punish the Guilty, it can be only because *he will not*. But that he will, he has made repeated and solemn Declarations; and his Nature is such, that from thence we may be fully assured of it. Even that Goodness, upon which Men are apt to build their Hopes of Impunity, and which moves the divine Being to allow them Space for Repentance; I say this very Goodness will incline him to punish them at last, if they continue impenitent. For since God is perfectly good, he will always do what is best; now it is best in every Government, that Order and Discipline should be maintained, by dispensing Rewards to the Good, and Misery to the Wicked; which, so far as it is not

com-



completed in this World, it is only reserved to be done in the next.

WITH regard to the Certainty of the Punishment, it makes no Difference, whether God delays it for one Day, or for a Thousand Years. There is no fear, lest in the mean time the Sinner should escape out of his hands, or lest, when the proper Season is come, God should neglect to punish him, through Inconstancy or Forgetfulness. He is not slack, as some Men count Slackness, who presume, that because he bears for a time, he will bear for ever. The Reasons, which move him to spare at present, will cease hereafter; and then what a dreadful Reckoning will they have to pay, who have added to their other Crimes a most disingenuous Abuse of his Patience, and Contempt of his Goodness. But, says the Sinner to himself, it will be long before this Day shall arrive. And indeed how long it will be, is exactly known to God only; but that it cannot be at any great Distance, you and I may know certainly enough, for it is no farther off than the End of Life, which to all Men is, in the Eyes of God and Wisdom, even just at hand. The Interval to some is an Hour,

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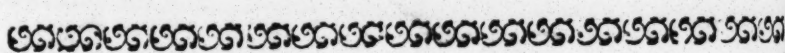
Hour, to some a Night, to some a few Years, to these but a Span, compared with Eternity. But suppose, you were assured from Heaven, that you should continue on Earth ten thousand Years, at the End of which, unless in the mean time you acquire the habits of Virtue, you should enter upon a state of unspeakable Torment; in this case, to neglect the Improvement of your Mind, would argue egregious and miserable Folly. Much more when you are assured, in a far shorter Space, and how short none can tell, the divine Justice will execute Sentence upon you, unless you repent. It is impossible to aggravate that Madness, which runs upon Evils of *Eternal Duration*, more dreadful than can be conceived, as certain as the Being of a God, and as near as the End of this earthly Being.

S E R-



## S E R M O N XVI.

Temporal Evils no Marks of God's  
Displeasure.



LUKE xiii. 4. and 5.

*Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, and slew them; think ye, that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*



IN the first Verse the Evangelist informs us, what it was that drew from our Saviour these Reflections. Some of the Company had been giving him an account of the barbarous Murder of certain Galileans, whose Blood

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Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices. It is probable, that in relating the tragical Story, they gave some Intimation, as if they thought it was a Judgment from Heaven upon these Galileans, and a certain Sign they were great Sinners. Hence our Saviour might take occasion to correct their prejudice: and shew them, that no outward temporal Sufferings are any Arguments of Guilt in the Sufferers.

Or perhaps, he thought, the bare Relation of this horrid Murder, furnished him with a proper Opportunity of checking the like Prejudice in the Minds of his Disciples. At least, it is certain, they had fallen into the same way of thinking, as appears from a Passage in St. John's Gospel, see Chapter ix. 1, 2. *And, as Jesus passed by, he saw a Man, which was blind from his Birth; and his Disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind?* They were satisfied, it seems, that his Misfortune must be a Judgment upon him, either for his own, or the Sins of his Parents; only they knew not where to fix the Guilt.

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BUT whether our Saviour intended principally to remove a Prejudice, he had observed in his Disciples, or in those, that related the Murder of the Galileans; or only to caution his Hearers against a prevailing Error; I say whatever view, our Saviour might have in these Words, we may, with his Authority, observe from them, that we ought not to regard the Afflictions, which befall our Neighbours, as Proofs of their Wickedness, or of the Displeasure of Heaven against them.

IN discoursing upon this Subject, I shall consider *first*, the Causes, which are apt to lead Men into such uncharitable Censures. *Secondly* the Guilt and bad Effects attending them. And, *thirdly*, I would offer some Arguments against them.

IF we enquire into the Reasons, why Mankind are so generally prone to pass these uncharitable Censures, we shall perhaps find, that it sometimes ariseth from their Inability otherwise to reconcile the Evils, they observe in the World, with the belief of a righteous Providence. Their Principle is, that God being just and good, will inflict Calamities upon none, but the Wicked. From whence

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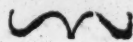
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It will follow, that Calamity must be a certain Mark of Wickedness. This was the Topic which Job's Friends chiefly insisted upon, in all their Conversations with him. They maintained, that, though he had worn a fair Appearance of Piety and Virtue, he must certainly have been an evil Man in the Sight of God, who would not otherwise have suffered him to fall under such heavy Misfortunes.

Thus, if no Crime appears, Men are apt to presume, there must be some secret Guilt; which Heaven sees, and is concerned to punish. But they are usually more free and bold in their Censures, when any apparent Wickedness is followed by a signal Misfortune; especially if the Misfortune is immediate and sudden: if it befalls them in the Place where they had committed the Crime; or if that which had been the Instrument of their Guilt, becomes afterwards the Occasion of their suffering. Persons of no extraordinary Characters, may have a strong Indignation against the Vices of others, which renders them eager to have Punishment speedily inflicted; and they are often so weak as to imagine, that the divine Being

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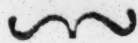
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is acted by the same Spirit of Impatience and  
 Resentment.

WRONG Notions of God and Religion may of themselves give Birth to these uncharitable Censures; but it cannot be denied, that Envy and Ill-nature, commonly assist in producing them. Hence we are more forward to put severe Constructions upon the Misfortunes of our Enemies, than of our Friends. And, I believe, Experience will verify it, that those, who are most accustomed to ascribe the Afflictions of their Neighbours to the Displeasure of Heaven, provoked by their Crimes, are usually remarkable for the Sourness and Malignity of their Tempers. Malice is apt to regard both God and Man, as resembling itself; and therefore it suspects and aggravates the Guilt of its fellow Creatures, and looks upon God, as prone to evil and revengeful Passions.—Upon the whole, this Humour of turning every Misfortune into a Judgment, ariseth sometimes from Superstition itself; but oftner from this, and Ill-nature together.

HAVING then considered the *Causes*,  
 proceed to point out the *bad Effects* of inter-  
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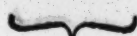
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regarding the Afflictions, which befall our Neighbours, into Punishments and Judgments. And 'tis plain, that to regard them, in this Light, will abate that Compassion we ought to feel for their Sufferings. The Sentiments of Humanity, which would have been heightened by a Sense of their Innocence, will be diminished in proportion as we think them guilty. Nay, we shall not only withhold Pity from them, but even be apt to feel a sort of Joy and Complacency in those Afflictions, which we consider, as nothing else but the Punishments they have deserved from Heaven by their Wickedness.

HARD Censures of our Neighbours are at all times unchristian and wrong; but they are in a peculiar Manner inhuman and cruel, when he lies under any pressing Calamity. At such Seasons it becomes us to encourage and comfort him, to heal his Wounds, and not add to their Anguish. But how must it aggravate his Sense of the Evil, he suffers, to hear us impute his Misfortune to his Guilt, and see us look upon him with Horror, as a Victim, devoted to the divine Vengeance? If besides, we persuade him to con-

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sider himself in the same dreadful light, as actually under the hand of incensed Omnipotence, it is not easy to conceive how any addition could be made to his Misery.

AND as this manner of judging upon Misfortunes is very uncharitable, in regard to the Person whom they befall; so it is very presumptuous, in regard to him who inflicts them. The Divine Being has not seen fit to inform us of his Purposes in any particular Affliction, which he sends upon our fellow-Creatures; and for us to set up for Interpreters of his Will in such cases, has a great deal of Rashness in it, and something also of Impiety. The Scriptures inform us, that the Judgments of God are unsearchable; but how many take upon them to explain these Judgments, with as much Preciseness and Assurance, as if he had made them privy to all his Councils? How many speak of unforeseen Disasters and terrible Events, as if they had been let into all the Secrets of Providence, and made perfectly acquainted with that private Conduct which governs the World? God has not been wanting to express his Displeasure against this Practice, as we may learn from the History of Job.

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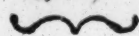
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His Friends, in pleading the Cause of Heaven, had born hard upon the Character of this upright Man. They taxed him with Hypocrisy and Wickedness, which they thought was necessary, in order to justify the Divine Providence, in laying upon him such grievous Afflictions: but God was so far from being pleased with this kind of Defence, that he reproves them for making use of it, in very strong terms; and commands them to apply to his Servant Job, to intercede for them, as the only way for obtaining his Pardon. See Job xlii. 7. and 8. *And the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite; my Wrath is kindled against thee and thy two Friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my Servant Job hath; therefore take unto you now seven Bullocks and seven Rams, and go to my Servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a Burnt-offering; and my Servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your Folly, in that you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my Servant Job hath.* — It appears from hence, that this is no small and trifling Crime. And here it would be in vain to alledge the Examples of the

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Prophets and holy Men of old in excuse for it. They indeed frequently declared the Calamities of others to be the Judgments of God upon them for their Wickedness, and pointed out the particular Sins, that moved him to inflict them; but then they were immediately inspired from Heaven, and commissioned to make these awful Denunciations. Their Example, therefore, will by no means justify us in doing the like; because, I imagine, we have none of us received such Communications of the Divine Will.

WHAT has been said may suffice, with respect to the Guilt of ascribing temporal Evils to the Divine Resentment of particular Crimes: And as whatever is wicked, is upon that account *foolish* and *imprudent*, this Practice must be allowed to be so in no inconsiderable Degree. But the *Folly* of it may be further made to appear from the following Considerations. *First*, that each of those Misfortunes, which we are apt to interpret as Judgments, frequently happen to Persons of the most approved Religion and Virtue. Ill Success in worldly Affairs, Loss of Children, Sicknes, violent and sudden Death

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Death, are dealt out by Providence with an undistinguishing hand, to the vilest Wretches; and to Men, whose Integrity we have not the least ground to suspect. With regard to Evils of this kind, *all things come alike to all; there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked; to the Clean and to the Unclean, as is the Good, so is the Sinner; and he that forswareth himself, as he that reverenceth an Oath.* If it be true, that the *ungodly* often prosper in the World, and encrease in Riches; that they are not in trouble, as other Men, nor plagued like other Men; it is no less true, that they, who have cleansed their Hearts, and washed their Hands in Innocence, are sometimes tormented all the day long, and chastened every Morning. Nay the Apostle seems to carry it something further, Heb. xii. 8. He does not only say, that *God chastens those he loves*; but, whereas many look upon Afflictions, as Marks of Divine Displeasure, St. Paul intimates, as if the withholding of such Correction were rather an Argument of it.

Eccl. ix. 2.

SUPPOSE your Neighbour had a fine Family of Children, numerous Herds of Cattle, and a large Fortune; every thing in short that  
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could render his Condition prosperous and flourishing: Suppose, that in one day all his Cattle were killed with Lightening; his fortune utterly ruined by some sudden Accident; and all his Children, as they were feasting together, buried in the Ruins of the House, overturned by the Wind: If moreover, he was suddenly visited with some grievous and painful Distemper; his Friends in the mean time reproaching, instead of comforting him; his Inferiours despising him; and those, that had been fed by his Bounty, insulting over him in Distress: When you saw so many unforeseen disasters following, one at the Heels of another, you perhaps would be tempted to conclude, that the Justice of Heaven, was certainly hunting him down for some great Wickedness. And yet this was actually the Case, of one, to whom the Divine Being himself bore this Testimony, that *he was a perfect and upright Man, one, that feared God and eschewed evil.* But we have a still greater Example to the same Purpose. It pleased God, that the most venerable Person, that ever appeared on Earth, should be cloathed in Poverty; should be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted

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## Of GOD's *Displeasure*.

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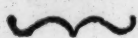
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XVI.

acquainted with Grievs; should live despised and rejected of Men; and die in the most painful and ignominious manner: Hereby teaching us, that as Prosperity is no Argument of Grace, so Affliction is no Sign of Guilt in him that suffers; nor of Displeasure in him that sends it. The Truth is, the good and bad are promiscuously involved in the same outward Calamities, and subject to the same Accidents; so that, if we make it a Rule with us to think a Man worse in Proportion to the greatness of his Misfortunes, it will lead us into endless Mistakes of very bad Consequence. It will be much the safer way, when we see any one of our Species, under any particular Oppression, to look upon it, as arising from the common Lot of human Nature, rather than from the Guilt of the Person who suffers.

ANOTHER Consideration, that ought to check our Censoriousness and Presumption, is this, that it is impossible for us to know, *what are Calamities*, and *what are Blessings*. How many Accidents have passed for Misfortunes, which have turned to the Welfare and Prosperity of the Persons, in whose Lot they

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Eccl. ix. 1.

they have fallen? How often have Disappointments in their Consequences saved a Man from temporal, how often from eternal Ruin? If we could foresee the final Issues of every thing, we might be allowed to pronounce boldly upon Blessings and Judgments. But now such is the Blindness and Imperfection of our Minds, that we are almost perpetually mistaking the one for the other. We each of us walk in the Dark, seeing only what is just at our Feet, and *unable to distinguish Love or Hatred, good or Evil, by what is before either ourselves or others:* and while our Views of things are so obscure and partial, what Rashness and Folly does it argue, to give our Opinion so positively concerning them?

A HOPEFUL Child dies—Was this a Blessing, or a Misfortune to its Parents? is a Question, to which the wisest among us can give no better Answer, than that he does not know. Had it lived, it is possible, it might have proved a great Comfort to them; but for aught we know, it might have brought them to the Grave with Sorrow for its Follies. Is the Bloom of Youth suddenly blasted? and do you regard this, as a Judgment?



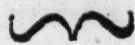
*of God's Displeasure.*

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ment? believe me it is a great Blessing, if it prevents or cures Vanity, and kindles a desire to excel in better Accomplishments. Is

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Is your Neighbour reduced from a flourishing condition to a state of Poverty? He is delivered from the Fear and Danger of being murdered, in guarding his Wealth. But to wave this Circumstance, if the lessening of his Fortune is the means of encreasing his Humanity and Piety, if he becomes more equitable to Men; more mindful of God; if, upon experiencing the Inconstancy of the World, he grows more indifferent towards it; more attentive to his Soul and its eternal Concerns; whatever human Folly may pronounce, the loss of his Wealth was really an Improvement of his Circumstances; and the same may be applied to any other Disappointment or Affliction.

THE afflictive Dispensations of Providence are often calculated for some merciful End, which we cannot foresee, not even by Conjecture. To be satisfied of this, you need only consult the History of Joseph. He was sold by his Brothers for a Slave to some strolling Ishmaelites; carried away into a foreign Country; again sold for a Slave; fell  
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under the Displeasure of his Master, and was cast into Prison. See him at once in Slavery, in Exile, in Prison. Stop here, and you would imagine he lay under the severe Frowns of Heaven. But read on and you will find, that this Series of seeming Disasters, were only so many Steps, by which God was raising him to great Dignity, to be the Saviour of Egypt, and the Support of his Father's House.

BUT nothing is commonly thought a greater Judgment, than *Death*; and yet perhaps nothing is oftner a real Blessing. For to a Soul, that is prepared to die, of which God is the only competent Judge; to such a Soul, I say, what is Death? but the final Period of Misery, and the Commencement of immortal Glory and Happiness. This used to be set forth among the Heathens by the following memorable Story. The Priestess of *Juno*, at a stated Time, was to go in her Chariot to the Temple, to assist at a customary and solemn Sacrifice. The Temple was at some distance from the Town, the Hour was come, but the Beasts, that should have drawn her Chariot, were by some accident out of the way. In this Exigence, her two

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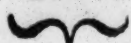
Sons, out of regard to their Mother, drew her to the Temple in her Chariot. The Mother transported with this Instance of filial Duty, petitioned her Goddess, that she would give them the greatest Reward, that God can possibly bestow on Man. Upon which the Youths, having supped with their Mother, went to rest, and the next Morning were found dead. This was such an Event, says Mr. Addison, as would have been construed into a Judgment, had it happened to the two brothers after an act of Disobedience, and would doubtless have been represented as such by any ancient Historian, who had given us an account of it.

LET us take, if you will, the Instances mentioned by our Saviour. If these Galileans, and the eighteen, upon whom the Tower fell, were prepared to die, and nothing appears to the contrary: in that case, Death was so far from being a Judgment, that no happier Event could possibly have befallen them. As to *the manner*, in which they died, whatever Ideas of Horror we may join to it in our foolish Imaginations, it is certainly much easier to be cut off at once  
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by the Sword, or crush'd to Death by the fall of a Tower, than to be a Week or a Month in dying of a Fever. A good Man, when dead, is happier, than the happiest of the living; and if he dies by sudden Violence, he suffers less beyond all Comparison, than he, that languishes away in the Torments of a Distemper. Yet such is the Folly of Mankind, that Death, especially sudden Death, has often been regarded as a Judgment from Heaven.

LET these Considerations then restrain our uncharitable and rash Presumption. *First* that all outward Events happen in common to Men of the best and worst Characters. *Secondly* that by reason of the Imperfection of our Understandings, and the shortness of our Views, we are incapable of knowing what are Calamities, and what are Blessings; so that very often, a great Mercy is by most accounted a heavy Misfortune.

I SHALL conclude with reminding you of the awful Admonition, which is here repeated by our Saviour, *except ye repent, ye shall all perish*. Divine Punishments there certainly are, however Mankind may err, when

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when they presume to apply them. The Justice of Heaven walks behind the guilty, though commonly it forbears to strike for some time, to see if Repentance will intercede for them. If Repentance interposeth in their behalf, Justice immediately desists from following them, and Mercy succeeds in its room; otherwise it will not fail to punish them, sometimes in Life, or at the farthest, when they die. But when it lashes them in this World, no mortal Eye is able to distinguish the Strokes it inflicts, from the Corrections of Mercy; and therefore it is not for Men to Judge or pronounce concerning them.

Now, we ourselves are each of us guilty of many Offences, and the only possible way, by which we may turn away from us the vindictive Justice of God, is by a sincere Repentance. If we neglect this; though possibly we may not meet with any sudden Disaster, though we may live in Peace, and die in our Beds, and though if Calamities should befall us, our fellow Creatures cannot justly regard them as Arguments of our Guilt, yet we may assure ourselves, we shall not finally escape the Divine Punishments.

SERM. Instead therefore of curiously observing the  
 XVI. Faults of our Neighbours, let us be attentive to our own Sins, and concerned to forsake them. Instead of applying the Judgments of Heaven to the Crimes of other Men, let us be careful not to draw them upon our own heads by our Vice and Impenitence.



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The GOOD MAN'S SUPPORT under  
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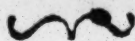
*Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous ; but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*



It is not perhaps desirable, that Men should conceive too high and florid an Idea of the Happiness attending a good Life. For though this may entice them into the Path of Wisdom ; yet if while they advance forward, they meet with greater Difficulties and with less constant and ravishing Joys

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than they had promised themselves, such a Disappointment will probably damp their Resolution, and extinguish all their Ardor in laudable Pursuits. To what purpose then should we flatter ourselves or others with romantic Hopes, the Vanity of which may soon be evinced by Fact and Experience? Were it not more prudent, not to raise our expectations too high? Thus if things turn out but indifferently, we shall not be so grievously shocked, nor tempted to abandon Virtue, as an empty Name; If they prove better than our Hopes, it will only be an agreeable and harmless Disappointment. That Man is the most likely to be steady and persevering in goodness, who at the time he embraceth it, is well assured it must leave him liable to great Sufferings, and may itself expose him to severe Tryals. Hence our Saviour is so far from dissembling the Hardships his Disciples would undergo in consequence of their adhering to him, that he describes them at large, and exhorts them, either to follow him with these Prospects, or not at all. Christians indeed were then exposed to more and greater Calamities, than they ordinarily are; yet still good Men are,

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and in this World always will be, subject to a Variety of Troubles and Misfortunes.

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WHATEVER fine Schemes of Happiness Philosophers have described, or we may have framed in our own Imaginations, certain it is, that many Afflictions often befall the best of Men; some, that are common to them with the rest of Mankind, and others, that are peculiar to Persons of this Character. The Righteous Man, as well as others, may be deserted by his Friend, and abused by his Enemies. Death may deprive him of those, that were as dear to him as his own Life, and swell his Heart with the tenderest Sorrow. His Virtue will not infallibly secure him from Infamy and Contempt, from Losses and Disappointments in his worldly Affairs; from Poverty, and the thousand Hardships that attend it, from bad Health and painful Distempers. If we deny, that these things are *Evils*, we contradict Nature and common Sense: If we condemn all those as bad Men, who have suffered such things, we are guilty of an uncharitable and groundless Presumption. Even those rigid Philosophers, who refused to call Adversity and Pain by the name of Evils, gave them Names



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no less, if not more formidable : They owned them to be *sharp,—grievous,—contrary to Nature,—hard to be endured* ; still they contended, they were not *Evils* ; that is, they differed from others in Words, while they agreed with them in the sense of things, and ridiculously denied in one Sentence, what they affirmed in another.

No less absurd would it be to conclude, that they, who suffer Afflictions, cannot therefore be righteous Men, though they seem to be so in outward Appearance ; thus we should rashly strike out of the List of the Virtuous, many, that have the fairest pretensions to Merit : For who can produce a better claim to Integrity, than he, who has retained the Appearance of it in difficult Tryals ? What melancholy Accidents have not sometimes, nay often, befallen the most excellent Persons ? *Job*, to whom *God* himself bore this Testimony, that *he was a perfect and an upright Man*, was visited with a Complication of lamentable Misfortunes ; deprived by Death of all his Children ; stripped of an affluent Fortune, which it is much more grievous to have lost, than never to have enjoyed ; tormented with intolerable

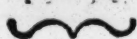
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tolerable Pains of Body; insulted with Scorn and Derision, by those, who had before been maintained by his Bounty; his Friends, in the mean time, instead of comforting him, reproaching him as an Hypocrite, and looking upon him with Horror, as a Victim devoted to the divine Vengeance. These, and the like Evils fall upon the Righteous and the Wicked without Distinction.

BUT Virtue has other Sorrows, in a great measure peculiar to herself: For besides his own private Afflictions, the good Man, thro' the tenderness of his Heart, feels the Calamities of his fellow Creatures, and shares in the manifold Evils he sees them suffer. The Sorrows of a Friend, the Dejection of the Poor, the Tears of the Mourner, and the Sighs of the Afflicted, which some can observe with great Tranquility, affect his Soul with a lively Concern. But nothing moves his Compassion more, than the Vices of Mankind, which others often make the Subject of their Diversion. When he observes Men hurting themselves and one another by their own Follies, creating wretched Disorders in human Society, and even threatening it with Ruin by the general Corruption of  
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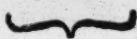
Lives and Manners; in seeing and hearing his benevolent Spirit is grieved from day to day with their unlawful Deeds. He also secretly mourns his own Imperfections. In this World, Folly cleaves to all, in different Degrees; but they, who have the largest Share of it, have this Comfort, that they can seldom find any in themselves; while such as have the least perceive it to their Sorrow.

LASTLY. Righteousness or Virtue sometimes draws upon itself the Hatred of bad Men, with all the Evils, they are able to inflict. Eminent Worth, which outshines others, and makes them appear despicable and mean, provokes their Envy, the most bitter and deadly of human Passions. *Wrath, says SOLOMON, is Cruel; and Anger is Outrageous: But who is able to stand before Envy?* Many a great and good man, it is certain, has fallen a Sacrifice to it, merely on account of his distinguished merit. Besides, Integrity may lead a man to oppose the wicked in their unjust and mischievous Designs; wherefore these will join themselves to such as envy him, and encrease the number of his Enemies. Nay, it is no uncommon

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mon thing for a good Man to incur the general Odium of a corrupt Age. By declaring against the superstitious Principles and evil Customs of the Times, he may irritate the Multitude against him, whose Passions being managed and heightened by the Arts of the crafty few, may carry them to seek and rejoice in his Ruin. That Virtue indeed, which is moderate, and riseth not above the common pitch, is generally safe and popular enough; but they, who have dared to be singularly and eminently good, have met with severe Tryals of their Constancy. How justly then may we deplore the Condition of human Life, where Men are so often treated ill for deserving well; where, while some are rewarded for their Crimes, others are punished for their Virtues; and where such, as have nobly endeavoured to stem the Tide of Corruption, have been overwhelmed and lost in the prevailing Torrent. No Villain, no Murderer, has at any time been prosecuted with greater Zeal, than some of the most excellent and godlike Men, that ever blessed this unworthy Earth: They have suffered not only Detraction, Calumny and Scorn, but Bonds, Imprisonment, Torture

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Torture and Death, from an ungrateful World, which was indebted to them for the most important Services. *Socrates* was poisoned; *JESUS CHRIST* was crucified and slain. Such O *GOD* has been the Portion of thy Sons; such O *Virtue*, the Fate of thy best and bravest Followers!—Thus it appears, that the Righteous are in this World exposed to many great Afflictions; to many, that are common to them with the rest of Mankind; to many, that are peculiar to themselves, as being the Fruits of their own Integrity. In-  
somuch that in all the Catalogue of human Evils, we cannot find one, from which Virtue is perfectly secure, except only Guilt and its natural Consequences.

THE various Calamities, that have befallen the innocent and good, have furnished an Objection against the Equity of Providence, which deserves to be considered. If *GOD* is just and good, he loves the Righteous; and if he loves them, why does he suffer them to be visited with such heavy Afflictions? Was he, like Man, Ignorant and Weak, he might perhaps be excused upon one or both of these Accounts; but he is neither unacquainted with their Sufferings, nor does he

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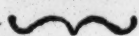
want Power to save and deliver them; for he constantly observes all human Affairs, and appoints to every Man what Condition he pleaseth without the least Difficulty to himself. What shall we say then? Has he no Concern for the Happiness of good Men? Does he regard alike the Righteous and the Wicked? Since both we see under his Government are involved in the same outward Calamities. Such Considerations have sometimes perplexed those who believe, and emboldened those who deny, that the affairs of Mankind are conducted by a wise and righteous Providence. I shall therefore endeavour to vindicate the ways of Heaven in this respect, and shew, that both the Confidence of the prophane, and the Doubts of the pious, which arise from hence, are without Foundation.

IF GOD lays Affliction upon the Righteous, it is not because he has no distinguishing Regard for them; but because their sufferings may answer many valuable purposes both to others, and themselves. *First, I say, others may reap various Advantages* by observing the sufferings of good Men. By such Events God may intend to admonish  
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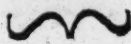
XVII.



us, that Prosperity is not the best of Blessings, nor Adversity the worst of Evils; since he frequently dispenses the one, and denies the other to his own Children. But we are too prone to mistake the divine Admonitions, and instead of learning from them those important Lessons, they are calculated to teach, we turn them into Arguments against his Goodness; we hastily presume, that outward Misfortunes are the heaviest Calamities, and then arraign the divine Government for permitting them to fall upon good Men: whereas we ought rather to argue, that because God distributes them to those he loves, therefore they cannot be the greatest of Evils. It should certainly diminish our Aversion to Poverty, Disgrace and Pain, and teach us not to dread them as principally miserable, when we consider, that these Things have been allotted by the best of Beings to his *beloved* Son, and to many of his *Favorites* in all Ages.

THE Suffering of the Righteous *may also be of Service to the World*; as by this means their Virtues are more clearly displayed, and recommended with greater force to the imitation of Mankind. Merit while attended with

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with Ease and Prosperity, is scarce discernible to mortal Eyes; at best it makes but a faint and doubtful Appearance: Never is its Lustre so evident, nor its Form half so engaging, as when we view it through the Medium of Distress. How can a Man's Patience be known without Adversity? or his Fortitude, except he has Hardships to endure, and Dangers to encounter? How can his Piety become conspicuous, if it cost him nothing? or his Integrity, if he has no Temptation to be dishonest. So long as goodness and worldly Interest invite him to pursue the same Road, it is not possible we should know for certain, which of them he follows, or whose Voice he principally regards. But let the Path divide; let Integrity exhort him to go one way, and the world another, if he still adheres to Righteousness, when it leads him directly to Toil and Suffering, Men doubt no longer of the Sincerity of his Goodness; and the approved reality and firmness of his Virtue, which is confessed and admired by all, kindles in many a spirit of Emulation. Hence God is said to try good Men with Afflictions; not that he has recourse to this Method in order

der to satisfy himself concerning their Characters; for he knows perfectly what they are, and how they would behave in all Circumstances, without any Experiments of this kind: But by his *trying* them is meant, that he thus gives their fellow Creatures an opportunity, which they would otherwise want of discovering their Virtues.

WHEN the *Father of all* intends to raise up great Characters for the Benefit of Mankind, he makes them to appear glorious by their Sufferings. Passing by therefore the weak and worthless (for these would sink under the weight of Adversity) and calling forth the noblest Souls, we may imagine him thus revealing to them the Intention of his Providence. “ I *know* and *love* your sincere  
“ Righteousness; but it is requisite for the  
“ good of Mankind, which is not to you a  
“ matter of Indifference, that they should  
“ know it too: Nor can they know it, un-  
“ less they observe you tryed with Affliction.  
“ I will therefore produce you upon a  
“ Theatre, where, in the view of the World,  
“ you shall conflict, some of you with Poverty,  
“ others with Pain, others with Death  
“ in its most frightful Forms: Come and  
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“ shew them the Vigor of your Minds ; set  
“ before them Examples of an Integrity,  
“ which they cannot but see, and which  
“ they cannot see without Admiration ; and  
“ by a noble Sufferance convince both your  
“ own and succeeding Ages, that Virtue,  
“ compleat and genuine Virtue, is quite in-  
“ vincible !”

UPON this point we might safely rest the Cause of Providence ; since it is plain the Afflictions of the Righteous tend to the general Good, which a just Governor will always prefer to the Interest of any Individuals.

BUT we may further observe, *that their Afflictions often produce great Advantages to the Sufferers themselves.* Among these, I am not afraid to mention the Glory they derive from hence. For though a good Man will not principally covet Fame, yet human Nature cannot be indifferent about it ; and the Prospect of it may justly afford the wisest and best a lively Satisfaction. Suffering Virtue at least may surely be allowed to comfort itself with the foresight of that Veneration, which is wrongfully withheld from it when living ; but which Posterity will pay with Interest  
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to its surviving Memory. If then the Prospect of Honour, Immortal Honour, is so justly agreeable to the human Heart, it should rather be esteemed a Favour, than an Injury, when GOD gives the Righteous an Occasion to signalize themselves, by leading them to encounter Dangers and Evils. Human Governors are commended, when they take care, that eminent worth should be known and distinguished; and shall we blame the Governor of All for consulting the Glory of good Men, and taking care, that their Virtue shall be applauded, and their Names revered throughout all Generations.

NOR is it a small Advantage, that by means of their Sufferings the Righteous may attain a comfortable Assurance of their own Constancy. As it is impossible for others, so it is not easy for us to know the Strength of our Virtue, before it has been tryed. While we enjoy Wealth, and the Respect of Mankind, how can we be assured, we could bear manfully Indigence and Contempt? We wrong no Man; But what should we do, if we lay under some strong and pressing Temptation? We are satisfied with the Disposals of Providence now things

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go on according to our own Wish; But should we still maintain a calm and pious Temper, if it should please God to visit us with some great Loss or heavy Affliction? We profess Religion, when it is held in Esteem: But if Piety was to become unfashionable, or expose us to Persecution, should we not be so weak as to abandon it? With relation to such things, modest and considerate Men are apt to entertain some Diffidence of themselves; but when God has furnished them with opportunities of trying their Strength, and they have found, that their Virtue will stand the Test of Adversity, they have good reason to lay aside their Doubts, and are guilty of no Presumption in taking to themselves the Satisfaction, which springs from a growing Confidence of their own Integrity.

SOMETIMES also Adversity is profitable to good Men, as it helps to cure them of their remaining Imperfections. *God* is concerned (if I may so speak) to observe some little Blemishes sullyng those Characters, which are in the main amiable in his Eyes; he therefore visits them with Afflictions, which are adapted to polish their Souls, and work them up



SERM. to greater Perfection. If he discerns in them  
 XVI. some secret Vanity, he tames and humbles  
 them by Sufferings. Are they too fond of  
 outward Enjoyment? He convinces them of  
 its Vanity, by depriving them of it. Are they  
 so taken up with the overflowings of his Good-  
 ness, as to be unmindful of the Spring? He  
 withdraws the Stream, and thus recalls them  
 to the inexhaustible fountain of living Wa-  
 ters. The sovereign Physician perfectly un-  
 derstands the Disorders of every soul, and  
 applies those Remedies, which, though pain-  
 ful in their Operation, are most salutary in  
 their Effects: Wherefore the bitter Draughts  
 he sometimes Administers to good Men, are  
 so far from betraying a want of Regard for  
 them, that they are themselves Proofs of his  
 Care for their Interest. As good Fathers  
 correct their Children out of Kindness to  
 them; so their Heavenly Father chastens the  
 Righteous, because he loves them.

AFFLICTIONS are the Discipline, by  
 which GOD trains up his beloved Children to  
 higher Degrees of Virtue and Perfection; He  
 enures them to Hardships that he may im-  
 prove their Constancy; and plies them with  
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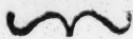
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learn to bear well the Accidents of Life. Strength of Mind, as well as of Body, is gained by Exercise, and impaired through Indolence. A continual enjoyment of Ease and Pleasure, melts the Soul, and makes it incapable of resisting the slightest Impressions of Pain; but repeated Conflicts with Fortune strengthen its Nerves, confirm its Fortitude and Patience, and enable it at length to conquer with ease the evils of Mortality. Trees, that are exposed to frequent Blasts, strike deep Root, and are not so easily broken, as those, that grow secure from Storms, in some low Valley: In like manner, Minds that have been well exercised with the Storms of Fortune, will stand much firmer against them, than such as have enjoyed a perpetual Calm.

He must be a Fool indeed, who counts upon passing through this World without meeting with any Misfortunes: There is therefore but one Way of attaining to a State of Security; namely, that since we cannot hope to be exempted from Afflictions, our Hearts be prepared and fortified against them. Do you think those happy and favored of Heaven, who are dissolved in Luxury and

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Ease? Fatal Indulgence! which disarms and softens the Soul, and leaves it an easy Prey to approaching Distress. While their Enemy is hastening towards them, they lose their Strength instead of encreasing it. Trouble, to which all Men are born, will overtake us sooner or later, and the longer it is delayed the less will they be qualified to bear it. But GOD deals more favorably with the Righteous, when he seems to treat them with Severity; He hardens them with Labor and Pain, as a good General his Soldiers: that being duly disciplined for the Warfare of Life, they may collect more Vigor, and go through the Hardships of it with Cheerfulness; neither daunted by the Appearance of Danger, nor desponding under the Pressure of Calamity.

PROVIDENCE therefore is fully vindicated with regard to the Afflictions of good Men, which we see are profitable, not only to Mankind around them, but also to themselves. Even in the present Constitution of things, where the Righteous are exposed to so many Sufferings, GOD has not left them without distinguishing Marks of his Favor; having made Virtue in the darkest Circumstances

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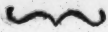
stances preferable to Vice in those, we esteem the best and most Fortunate. The good Man has many Afflictions: So also has the Sinner. He has some Afflictions, which the Sinner escapes: He escapes many evils, with which the Sinner is tormented. He has not the Tumults of Rage and Lust; He has not the Repinings of Envy; He has not the Cares and Anxieties of Avarice; He has not the burning Desires and bitter Disappointments of Ambition; and in avoiding Intemperance he avoids a manifold and certain Plague: He has not, in fine, that Conscioufness of Guilt, which haunts the wicked Breast, and fills it with dreadful Apprehensions; and which would far outweigh all the Calamities of the brave and good, tho' Earth and Sea were thrown with them into the same Balance.

THE Good Man has many Afflictions, He has also many substantial Enjoyments. I dare not assure him, that he shall obtain Wealth and Honor, and Ease and Pleasure; and indeed, if I could, this would signify little to him; because he is not solicitous about them, nor discontented at their Absence: And yet thus far perhaps I might safely go;

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that

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that in general he stands at least as fair to obtain them, as one of an opposite Character. However with regard to these precarious things, he must take his chance; for they are often, though not always, denied to the Wise and Good; and bestowed upon Fools and Knaves; yet they cannot make these happy; nor can the want of them make the Righteous miserable. But I dare assure to him the immediate Enjoyment of much nobler Satisfaction, in the Peace and Composure of his Mind; in the Consciousness of doing and deserving well; in the calm and steady Approbation of his own Heart. These are Blessings peculiar to Virtue, inseparably connected with it by the eternal law of God and nature; of which it cannot be hindered or deprived: which, whoever enjoys, cannot be miserable, and whoever wants, cannot be Happy.

DOES the Righteous suffer many Afflictions? He has many powerful Supports under them. *First*, the Native Strength of his Virtue, which enables him to break their Force by opposing to them a firm and constant Mind. For, when Sufferings are borne with Fortitude and Patience, if they do not entirely

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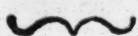
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entirely lose their Nature as *Evils*, it is certain they lose much of their Weight. The weak and pusillanimous, who voluntarily sink under the Pressures of Pain, would be quite oppressed by those Afflictions, which the good man exerting the Strength, he derives from his Virtue, can bear with Chearfulness. Religion also lends him a powerful Aid; his Sense of a present approving DEITY, the witness of his Sufferings and of his Behaviour under them; his Submission to Heaven, which he is persuaded, orders for the best all Events, and such as relate to himself in particular; his Confidence in God, both living and dying; and his lively Hope of immortal Blessedness in a future State, conspire to sustain his Soul, and keep it erect and steady under the heaviest Burdens, that are laid upon him.

THUS, notwithstanding the Calamities, which befall good Men, we may find in this World plain Traces of a due Order and equitable Providence. God has given strong proofs of his regard for them, and the Favor, he shews them here, affords a good Presumption, that he will not neglect their Interest hereafter. Since he has consulted their



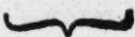
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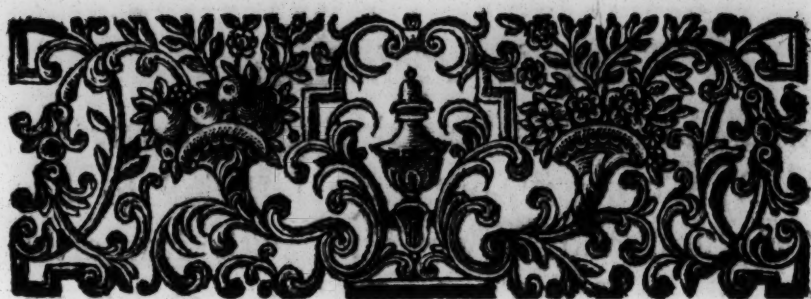
welfare in Life, we may be assured he will not drop them at Death, but continue to employ his Providence in their behalf, through all the Stages of their future Being. Virtue, says a late excellent Author, exposed as she is here, is not however abandoned or left miserable; she has enough to raise her above pity, though not above our Wishes: And as happy as we see her here, we have room for further Hopes in her Behalf. Her present portion is sufficient to shew Providence already engaged on her side; and since there is such Provision for her here, such Happiness and such Advantages even in this Life; how probable must it appear, that this providential Care is extended yet further to a succeeding Life, and perfected hereafter.

THESE Presumptions concerning the Happiness of Virtue in a future State, which are made probable by reason, are ascertained and confirmed beyond all doubt, by the Gospel Revelation: Here we are assured, that they, who have spent their Lives in doing and suffering according to the Will of God; shall be removed, when they die, into a State of eternal Peace and unspeakable Felicity. Death is a secure Haven to the good Man's Soul; where

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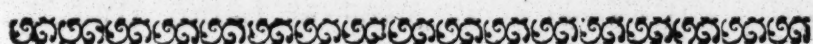


where as soon as he arrives (and shortly he must) God will put a final Period to his Troubles, and crown him with immortal Glory and Happiness.—Thus at last he will deliver the Righteous out of all his Afflictions. Or, we may say with the *Psalmist*, that he does deliver him *now*: Either because the joyful Prospect of the glorious Event, makes him as it were insensible of present Calamities, or because the time of his Deliverance is so near at hand, that it may be considered, as in a manner actually present.—Let what has been said suffice in discoursing upon this Subject. The Sum of all is this; that the Righteous do indeed suffer in this World many Afflictions; but that we have no Reason to distrust upon this Account, either the *Equity* of Providence, or the *Wisdom* of being Righteous.



## S E R M O N XVIII.

The BENEFIT of visiting our mourning Friends.



ECCLES. vii. 2.

*It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting—.*



IN the last Verse of the preceding Chapter *Solomon* observes, that with regard to the outward Circumstances of Life, we know not what is the best for us. And in the beginning of the Chapter he mentions several things, in their Judgments of which, Mankind in general are apt to mistake. To convince you, says he, that we are mostly ignorant

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*The Benefit of visiting, &c.*

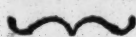
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ignorant of the comparative Value of Things, how many of us purchase Pleasures at the expence of Reputation. Though in truth a good Name, with all the Pains, that may be necessary to gain it, is better than precious Ointment, that is, than the most exquisite Gratifications of Sense. Who does not esteem the Birth of a Man a joyful Event, and his Death a lamentable Calamity? And yet the *Day of his Death*, if he be prepared for it, is happier to him than the *Day of his Birth*; since the one begins, and the other ends a State, in which he is exposed to numberless Misfortunes. Again, which of us would not choose to share in the Joys and Pleasures of a Feast, rather than to visit a Family, that is mourning for the late Decease of some near Relation? But here also we betray our Folly: for it is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting.

IN the following Discourse I shall endeavour to shew, that it is better to go to the *House of Mourning*, than to go to the *House of Feasting*, both as it is more laudable in itself, and more for our Advantage and Improvement. FIRST, I suppose it will readily  
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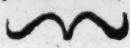
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be allowed a more commendable Act, to visit our Friends in their Distress, than to partake with them in their Prosperity and Pleasures. The Laws of Friendship evidently require, that, as we should be more desirous our Friends should visit us in the happy, than in the sorrowful Seasons of our Lives; so, on the other hand, we should be more forward to visit our Friends, when they are oppressed with Sorrow, than when they abound with Joy.

Not, but that we ought to encrease the Joys of our Friends, by sharing in them upon proper Occasions, as well as to lessen their Grievs by our Sympathy and Consolation; but the latter is an Office of much greater Worth and Importance. Let us take it in the fairest light, of which it is capable. Suppose you go to a Feast, not that you may indulge your Sense, but, that you may enjoy your Friends, and contribute to the good Humour and Improvement of the Company: This indeed is far from being a bad End, considered by itself; and yet how indifferent and trifling does it appear, when compared to the raising a dejected Soul, and reviving the Heart of a disconsolate Mourner?

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Mourner? In the House of Feasting it may SERM.  
be of little Consequence, whether you are XVIII.  
present or not; you need not doubt, but 

Ease and Chearfulness will be there, though you should be absent. But if you go to the House of Mourning, you will probably alleviate those Sorrows that overwhelm a whole Family, and sink it in the most exquisite Distress, of which Human Nature is capable.

THAT your Presence may answer such valuable Purposes, it is necessary you be moved with real Kindness; for the mere formal Visiter is rather a Burden, than a Relief to the Mourner. Many also upon these Occasions imprudently heighten the Sorrows of their Friends, instead of assuaging them. They remind them only of such things, as tend to enflame their Passion; and thus tear open afresh the Wound that Time was healing. While they are, or seem to be too deeply moved themselves, and indulge a weak effeminate Sympathy, they add to the Anguish of those, whom they ought to comfort. Such Company does more harm than good, and is much worse than Solitude itself. But if your Visits of this kind are animated



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nimated with real Humanity, and conducted with Prudence, they may be highly serviceable to your mourning Friends. Perhaps you may be so happy as to say something, that will moderate their Affliction. However, if you only shew them, you are solicitous to comfort them; this itself may go a great way towards gaining your End. They will possibly strive to conquer their Sorrows out of regard for you, and assume some degree of Chearfulness, lest by being obstinate in Grief, they should seem to slight and reject your friendly Endeavours. Nay, your very Presence with them may yield them no small Satisfaction, as it may convince them, that when Death has deprived them of one Friend, they have others left, who give them a fresh and no mean Testimony of their Esteem, by visiting them in Adversity. These things have commonly such great force, that though some of the wisest Men, that ever lived, have left us Treatises of Consolation, I make no doubt, but the converse of an intimate Friend, who is affected with our Concerns, and expresseth a desire to relieve us under them, is more supporting to the Mind in such Circumstances,

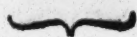
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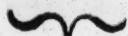
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cumstances, than all the Books of Consolation that ever were written.

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HE is an imperfect Friend indeed, who is fit only for the House of Mirth, but useless at those melancholy Seasons, when a Friend is most wanted. We should therefore all of us examine ourselves of what value we are to our Friends: And having taken due Care to qualify ourselves for being serviceable to them, let us not neglect them in the time of their Distress, nor leave them to pine away in solitary Grief. On such Occasions they have a right to Compassion from all Men; but something more is due from us, namely, that we use our best Endeavours to prevent them from sinking under the weight of their Sorrows, and restore them to a State of Serenity and Comfort. What Visits of Ceremony? What Enjoyments of Luxury? What Conversation with those, that are at ease, though ever so delightful or Improving, can we esteem comparable to the Performance of these humane and charitable Offices? But charitable and humane are low Terms, when I am authorised to call them pious and sacred. St. *James* when he is describing that Religion, which is pure and undefiled in the Sight of



of God, makes one half of it to consist in visiting, not the joyful and happy, but the Fatherless and Widows in Affliction.

THUS in point of Merit it is plainly better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting. Let us next consider in what respect it is more for our *Advantage*. Some can hardly contain themselves from excess, when Plenty is before them; and to such Persons the House of Feasting is the most dangerous Place they can go to. But I will suppose, you can resist the strongest Temptations to violate the Laws of Sobriety; and yet it is more for your Advantage to visit those that mourn, upon various accounts. For *first*, by this means you will give your Friends a much more unquestionable Evidence of your Regard for them, and consequently gain more upon their Affections, than by visiting them in the days of their Prosperity and Joy; this they may suspect, you do for your own sake, but the other they will readily impute to your sincere Kindness for them. Our Saviour has assured us, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*; to confer an Obligation upon another, than to have one laid upon yourself.

Acts xx.  
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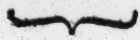
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Now when you partake at a Feast, it may not be easy to determine, who is most obliged, You, or the Person that entertains you. The Favor is mutual at best; and I believe in most cases, an indifferent Person would give it against *you*. But it is quite otherwise, when you go to comfort a mourning Friend; in this Case the Obligation lies only upon *him*, and you will scarce find him insensible of it. The undoubted Kindness of your Intention may perhaps go farther in binding him to you, than any thing you could do for him, in the more joyful Seasons of his Life. Hence the Son of Syrach well adviseth, *Fail not to be with them that weep, and mourn with them that mourn, and be not slow to visit the sick; for these things shall make thee to be beloved*; beloved, not only by those you endeavour to comfort, but by as many as observe your Friendship and Humanity.

If you thus shew yourself willing to share in the Grievs of your Friends, you will be the more welcome to partake of their Joys. And it will dispose you to perform these benevolent Offices, if you keep in mind the common Condition of Mortality. What



happens to another may happen to you; and the next that must die, may be one of your best and dearest Friends. God only knows, how soon Death may enter your Dwelling; how soon your House may become the House of Mourning; how soon you may want Consolation yourself. When this befalls you, it will be more for your Advantage, to have others indebted to you in mourning than in feasting Visits, that you may receive back the Comforts you have bestowed. Whereas if you neglect your Friends in their Sorrows, you will have little Reason to complain, though you are destitute and forlorn, in the time of your adversity.

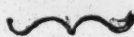
BUT the great Objection to what I am now recommending, is, that if we associate with the Sorrowful, we shall be infected with Grief. Who would visit the House of Mourning, which is overcast with Darkness and Gloom, the very Entrance of which is enough to damp our Spirits, and fill us with Melancholy? At least, who is so fond of Sorrow, as to prefer this to the Enjoyment of a Feast, where Pleasure and Chearfulness enlivens every Heart, and are encreased  
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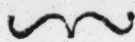


and heightened by a friendly Communication? These are the Sentiments of light and giddy Minds, who never esteem themselves happy, except when they are dissolved in Mirth and Laughter. Such Persons will hardly credit what I am going to say; that a serious and humane Spirit, which can truly feel the Affliction of a Friend, will find as true a Satisfaction in sympathizing with those that mourn, as in rejoicing with them that rejoice.

THEREFORE, if you are incapable of Sympathy, though the House of Mourning may be dull and uncomfortable; yet if you have a lively Sense of Compassion, it will be quite the reverse. A sort of Melancholy indeed will seize upon your Spirit; but it will be a Melancholy of a soft and a pleasing kind, which has nothing of Gloom or Dulness in it. There is a Mixture of somewhat so agreeable in the tender Sensations of Humanity, as quite overbalanceth the Sorrows, which it brings upon us: the Mind is satisfied with itself, for being touched in this generous way; and enjoys (if I may so say) its own Pain. A benevolent Man, has a much more solid and manly Pleasure, while the



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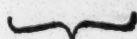
sacred Tears of Pity spring in his Eyes, than the wanton Fool in his gayest Moments. We shall therefore but ill consult our own Satisfaction, if we study either to suppress the Motions of Compassion, or to avoid the Objects of it.

WE should rather seek the Society of the distressed, not only from a Sense of Duty, but also, that we may indulge ourselves in the generous Pleasure of pitying and relieving them. To one, that has the Heart of a Man, what can be more delightful, than by his Presence and Conversation to give Ease, and as it were Life from the dead to a disconsolate Family? Such Visits, whatever they are at the time, will not be the most unpleasant in the Review. I am confident you will reflect with more Satisfaction, upon the Hours you consecrate to these pious Offices, than upon the Time you spend in feasting and Mirth.

BUT we should be concerned rather to improve, than to please our Minds: rather to work in them the Habits of Virtues, which will be of lasting Advantage to us, than to gratify our Sense with transitory Pleasures. Now in this respect it is much better to

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go to the House of Mourning than to the House of feasting, upon several Accounts. For *first*, by conversing with the Miserable, we shall exercise and strengthen the Principle of Humanity, which is one of the noblest Affections of our Nature, one of our most honourable Distinctions from the brute Creation. In a too easy and pleasant Life, while we are neither disturbed by any Afflictions of our own, nor attentive to the Sorrows of our fellow-Creatures, our Hearts are apt to harden by degrees, till at last we contract a brutish Insensibility. To prevent this, and to cherish within us that Sense of Compassion, which is the glory of our Nature, it will be of great Service to us, if we associate sometimes with the Wretched, and set our Pity at work by attending to their Miseries. Next to our own Sufferings, nothing tends so much to humanize and soften the Temper, as frequently to observe the Calamities and partake in the Grievs of our Fellow-Creatures.

ANOTHER benefit arising from hence, is; that, while we behold and pity the Sorrows of others, we shall become better reconciled to our own Condition. If we have

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experienced the like Afflictions, it will afford us no small Relief to see, that what has happened to us is only the common Lot of Mortals, and nothing but what all Men are exposed to, as well as we, by the sovereign Law and Appointment of Nature; to murmur against which would be equally impious and vain. If, on the other hand, God has hitherto spared our Friends to us, the Tears of such, as are deprived of theirs, may help to give us a more lively Sense of our own Happiness, and quicken our Gratitude to God, for continuing to us the Enjoyment of our Friends. Thus we shall bring back more Content than we had taken with us, which, it may be, is not always the Case, when we come from a Feast.

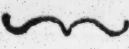
NOR let us be discouraged from visiting the House of Mourning by the Gloominess of the Place and the infectious nature of Grief; a Circumstance, which ought rather to recommend it unto us, and shews it preferable to the House of feasting and Mirth. For as a continual flow of joy and Pleasure corrupts the Mind, so it is not easy to say, how much good a little Sadness of Heart may sometimes do us. The former commonly produceth

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Pride and Levity, and makes us wanting in due regard both to God and Man: But Sorrow tames and humbles the Mind, checks the Wantonness of our Passions; teacheth us to know ourselves, makes us thoughtful and considerate, and apt to conceive lively Sentiments of Pity and Tendernefs. Sorrow is the best Nurse of Wisdom, just thought, and good Dispositions; and it is a great Argument of our Folly, that we are so careful to avoid what may in itself be so edifying to us; especially when Virtue and Friendship call upon us to associate with it. Your mourning Friends may have too much of it already, so much as quite overcomes them, and drowns their Spirits; perhaps, therefore, it would be alike advantageous to you and them, that you should taste of their bitter Draught, and drive some of it into your own Breast. Thus you may benefit yourself, and do them a real Kindness at the same time. Upon other Occasions you may possibly receive from your Friends, that which they can but ill spare, and which does you no considerable Service; but, when you share in their Sorrow, you take from them what is better, both for them to part with,

SERM. XVIII.  for you to have. It is Pity methinks, that Visits, which are so gainful to both Sides, should be neglected; while we enter so readily into a Commerce of a different Kind, which does not always turn out very profitable to either. Many a Man has returned from a Feast, worse than he went thither.

THOUGH as to those Feasts wherein insipid Mirth and brutal Pleasures are the principal Entertainments, I am content to wave the Advantage, I might take, by insisting upon them. Besides a well furnished Table, let there be, if you will, perfect Sobriety, innocent Chearfulness, Harmony of Minds, pleasant and useful Conversation; in short, whatever can recommend a Feast to a wise and temperate Man: still I say, you cannot justly expect so much Advantage from it, as you are likely to reap from a mourning Visit. The one will be apt to excite and improve in your Mind the best Dispositions, which will be a Source of lasting Happiness to you: As to the other, when a little time is past, the Pleasure is gone; and if any Benefit remains with you, it can arise only from the Discourse, that has past; to balance which, it is well if you do not find  
in

*our mourning Friends.*

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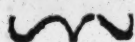
in yourself a Diffipation of Thought, and a backwardness to return to the serious duties of life.

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BUT *lastly*, the House of Mourning is preferable to the House of Feasting, because it is more apt to remind us of our own Mortality. This is the Argument, with which Solomon confirms the Assertion of my Text ; for *that is the end of all Men, and the living will lay it to his Heart.* To think frequently of the great Change, which is coming upon us, would have the happiest influence upon our Minds. We should hardly be so fond of Honours, Fame and Wealth, were we deeply sensible, how soon we must bid an eternal adieu to this World, and all its Enjoyments. Outward Possessions would seem not worth being proud of, when we have them ourselves ; not worth an envious thought, when they belong to others ; did we consider, as we ought, that both we and they must shortly die, and leave them behind us. Serious and habitual Thoughts of dying, begetting in us a noble indifference to every thing else, would excite us to hasten our preparation for Eternity, by cultivating in our Minds the Habits of Virtue, and applying ourselves  
with



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with diligence to the Service of God and our Generation. O that Men were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter End! Let Death, says one, be every Day before thy Eyes; and thou wilt never indulge a mean Thought, nor desire any thing with too much Eagerness.

THUS to meditate often upon our Mortality, and lay it to Heart, would be of unspeakable advantage to Us. But, alas, we are very apt to forget, what, of all things in the World, it concerns us most to remember. Business, Pleasures, Feasts and Diversions, fill our Heads and leave no Room for the Thoughts of dying. How many of us spend one Day after another without once considering, that the Day of Life is drawing towards an End? or, if by some Accident the Idea of Death comes uncalled, how many strive to banish it as soon as they can, like a troublesome Guest, that interrupts their Joy, and disturbs their Repose? How few of us care to recollect often, that we are dying Creatures? Since therefore the Consideration of our own Death is so profitable to us; and yet so seldom present to our Minds,

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Minds, we should esteem that an happy Circumstance, which will renew and leave with us the Remembrance of it. Now the joys of a Feast will be more likely to efface, than revive such wholsom impressions; but in the House of Mourning we shall hardly escape them. While we attend upon the funeral Solemnity, and follow the Corps of a departed Friend to its long Home, who is so stupid as not to consider, that he himself must shortly go the same Way? Or when we are present in a House, where the Footsteps of Death are yet recent and fresh, we shall be drawn almost unavoidably into the like Reflections. Upon the whole then, as nothing more directly and universally tends to make us better, than Meditations upon our own Death; so nothing is fitter to lead us into such Meditations, than the Visits we make to the House of Mourning.

S E R.



## S E R M O N    X I X .

The W I S D O M of considering our latter End.



D E U T E R .    x x x i i .    29 .

*O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter End !*



W H E N we know of any remarkable Change, that is going to happen in our Circumstances, we are apt to dwell upon it in our Thoughts ; and though something may for a time divert us from considering it, we soon resume the Meditation, and revolve it over and over in our Minds. But one unavoidable

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voidable Change, of a most interesting Nature, awaits us all, which we seldom consider, though nothing in the World has a better Claim to our habitual Attention. That we must shortly die, we are each of us as certain, as that ever we were born; and yet many of us could scarcely think less of dying, were we secure of enjoining an Immortality upon Earth. The Prospect of a Removal into another Neighbourhood makes us anxious and thoughtful about it, but the assurance of a speedy Removal into another World, engages only a rare and flight Recollection.

STRANGE indeed! was it not so common, that a Creature capable of forethought and Reflection, who has so many Symptoms of Mortality within himself, and such frequent Warnings given him by the Death of his Neighbours, should meet his Fate, almost as blind and unattentive to it as the Brutes themselves. But we are so taken up with the Business, Pleasures, and Amusements of the World, that we have scarce Leisure to think of leaving it; or if we have Leisure, we want Inclination. Which of us careth to meditate much upon his own Dissolution,

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solution, as absolutely certain, and in all Probability very near? How many spend one day and week after another, not once reflecting, that the Remainder of Life is continually wasting; and that at the longest, a short succession of Days and Weeks must bring them to the Grave? Most Men are so far from taking Pains to remember, that they industriously seek to escape or banish all Sense of their Mortality. If by some Accident it forceth itself upon them, they flatter themselves that it is a remote Event, and dismiss the Consideration of it as unseasonable and premature. They hate and drive away the gloomy Imagination, which checks their Licentiousness, damps their Gaiety, and constrains them to be serious. They are so cowardly withal, that they dare not apply themselves in good earnest to meditate upon Death. Their timorous Minds recoil at the frightful Idea, and find no Repose, till they are delivered from this disagreeable Companion. They fly therefore into the hurry of Business, the Noise of Company, or the Whirl of Pleasure; glad if by any means they can divert their Thoughts, and forget their Mortality. Thus  
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there is room for applying to the Generality of Mankind that affectionate Wish, which the great Lawgiver expressed concerning the Jews! *O that they were Wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter End.*

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I SHALL endeavour, in what follows, to shew the Wisdom and Importance of attending to our Mortality; and among all the Precepts that were ever delivered in order to mend the Heart, there is none of greater and more universal use, than this, that we be daily mindful of Death. This single Consideration, often renewed, and deeply impressed upon the Mind, would moderate our Passions, and make us diligent in acquiring the Habits, and doing the Works of Piety and Goodness. In prosperity it would preserve us from Insolence, and in Adversity from Dejection of Mind. We should not be so apt to insult and despise our Inferiours, did we often reflect upon the common Dust, wherein all Distinction, will soon be lost between us and the meanest of Mortals.

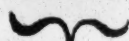
ONE serious Look towards the Grave, even one would be sufficient to abash our Pride,

to



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to make us humble in the highest Stations, and to extinguish all remains of Contempt towards any of our fellow-Creatures, how far soever they are placed below us. The Thoughts of dying would enable us to enjoy good Fortune with Moderation. They would keep down all indecent and vain Exultations, were we raised ever so high, and ever so suddenly. The grand House, the ample Fortune, the Walks and Gardens, Woods and Plains, the outward Pomp and Ornaments of Life, must all be left in a short Time, and lost for ever. Who then would be transported beyond measure with the possession of these things? who would be too much elevated on account of any worldly Enjoyments, if he considered, as he ought, that they must all in a few years terminate in Death?

MEDITATIONS upon Death would help to preserve our Temper even and Composed in every Condition. Hence we might learn both to rejoice, as though we rejoiced not in the Day of Prosperity, and to weep as though we wept not upon sorrowful Occasions. The good Man, while tost upon the Sea of Life, is never out of Sight of Land,  
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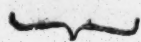
and may comfort himself, whenever he pleases, by looking to the End of his Toils and Sorrows. Is he afflicted with bodily Pain? he shall soon be delivered from the Body, and along with it, from all its Disorders. Is he mourning the Loss of his Friends; he shall be restored to the enjoyment of them in a happier World, never more to be separated from them. Death is a secure Haven, in his Course towards which, no Accidents can retard him; where, as soon as he arrives, (and shortly he must) he shall not only be released from his Troubles, but placed beyond all possibility and fear of Affliction. Hither then let him frequently direct his Views, that the Prospect of their approaching Period, may encourage and support him under his present Calamities.

THUS by considering our latter End, we might keep even the Balance of our Minds, neither elevated with the Gifts, nor sinking beneath the Pressures of Fortune. At the lively Idea of Death, all the Passions subside, and leave the Soul in a State of serious Tranquillity. Envy dies away, Resentment cools, and the fond admiration of

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worldly Things decays and vanishes. We shall scarce be disturbed, because others exceed us in Wealth and Grandure, if we frequently recollect; that in a very little time, Death will entirely abolish these Distinctions, and reduce all Men to the same Equality in which they were born. The Remembrance of Death, would also assist us in subduing our Anger; both as it abates our Pride, which gives the Edge to Injuries and Affronts; and as it lessens in our eyes, the value of those Things, in which we are injured. When you are moved with Indignation, says one, upon any account, it will be of Service, if you call to mind, that human Life is momentary, and that it will not be long before we shall each of us be carried to the Grave. Such Meditations will contribute to stifle every ill-natured Passion, and to work us into a mild, placable, humane Temper.

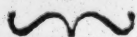
DEATH, did we listen to its Instructions, would shew us in the clearest Light the Vanity of human Things; and teach us to look down upon them with a noble Indifference. It demonstrates beyond all dispute, that whatever they may be in their own nature, they



they are momentary and perishing with regard to us; and that therefore it is Madness to pursue them with Vehemence and Anxiety. The Tomb with silent, but irresistible Eloquence, reproves the Folly of Avarice and Ambition. Why, O ye stupid Mortals, why do you seek to enlarge without Bounds your Estates and Treasures? Why are you so solicitous to lay Field to Field, when you cannot but know, you must soon be confined within the compass of a Grave? To what Purpose these growing Heaps of Wealth fought with so much Toil, and kept untouched with miserable Anxiety? To what End, if not for a comfortable Subsistence? but you lose the Comfort of enjoying what you have, through your Care to provide against a future Season, which you will never reach. Never torment yourself with the carking Solicitude about a distant Futurity; for if you can but furnish out enough for a few Years, Death will not fail to provide for you afterwards. You must enter naked, you must shortly enter, into the House appointed for all living: What then will your Treasures avail you? though indeed I ought not to call them *yours*, for they will have chan-

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ged their Master. But how can they make your Condition better than his, who lived and died in Poverty? You can scarce be so far mistaken, as to think, you are to stay for ever in this World. You are only travelling through it. The Journey is short. Whatever you lay in, that is more than sufficient to maintain you upon the Road, will only be an useless burden to yourself; and in all probability your Successor, will waste in foolish Extravagance, what you acquire by as foolish Avarice.

As to you, that keenly thirst after Fame and Distinction, besides the Uncertainty of these things, you may do well to consider, that they are in their own Nature of short Duration; Death will strip you at once of all your Honours and Preferments; and though you may perhaps be remembered and made now and then a Subject of Conversation, for a few Years after you die; yet in the quick Succession of one or two Generations, your very Name may be entirely forgotten; and the whole World be ignorant that you ever existed. But suppose Fame should sound her Trumpet over you ever so loud and long; what shall you be the better  
for

for this? the Grave is deaf as well as silent. You will have no Sense, and consequently no Enjoyment of all this Noise. Herein, therefore, you will have no real Advantage over him, who sinks into Oblivion at the same time when he drops into his Grave.

BUT however opposite the Sense of Death may be to the covetous and the aspiring Humour, it may perhaps be thought likely rather to promote, than discourage an Inclination to Indolence and Pleasure. Our Mortality, we know, has often been made an Argument for a soft and luxurious Life, and this Maxim been embraced by many as just and rational; *let us eat and drink, for to Morrow we die.* The meaning of this Exhortation must doubtless be; that we should enjoy the *present* in the best Manner we can, because we are certain of nothing beyond it. Now though the Advice expressed in these general Terms, may be thought wise and good; yet the Reason by which it is supported, is somewhat extraordinary. For what if we must not die to Morrow? What if we are assured, we must never die? Would it not still be the wise Part, to make the best of every fleeting Moment? But to



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pass by this Absurdity, the abovementioned Maxim, as applied by the Men of Pleasure, to recommend a voluptuous Life, goes upon two Suppositions, which are equally false. *First* it supposes, that to eat and drink, is to make the best of the present Time, considered by itself. And *secondly*, that Death is the End of our Existence. Whereas sensual Gratifications are in fact the meanest and the most worthless, of which our Nature is capable; and beyond all comparison inferior to the Pleasures that flow from Virtue and Religion. And therefore, whether we must die to Morrow, or not die at all, it is Folly to waste in gratifying our Senses, those Moments which we may employ to much better Advantage in improving our Minds, and performing the Offices of Piety and Virtue. Thus even they, who regard Death as the final Period of their being, can draw from thence no just Argument in Favour of Licentiousness.

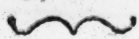
BUT Death is not the End; it is only a Change in the manner of our Existence; a Separation of Soul and Body; the former of which will continue, when the latter is mouldered into Dust: And considered in this light,

light, so far is Death from recommending your Pursuit of bodily Pleasure, that it pleads against it no less earnestly, than against the pursuits of Honour and Wealth. Your Soul must shortly be divided from this Body, and exist, for a Time at least, apart by herself. Now if you cherish in her an Affection towards it, and those Pleasures which depend upon it, she will be torn from it at last with Difficulty and Reluctance; and remain miserable in her State of Separation: regretting the loss of what she had principally valued, and wishing in vain to be again restored to the Enjoyment of it. You should therefore be daily weaning her from a Fondness for the Body, and be loosening the Bonds, which hold them together; that being thus prepared, she may pass through the approaching Dissolution willingly and with ease: and not be tormented afterwards with vain Desires of Re-union, which it will not be in her Power to accomplish.

THE strongest Cement, which binds the *spiritual* to the *earthly* Part, is the Lust of sensual Gratifications; and this Lust may be strengthened by Habits of Indulgence to such a degree, that the Mind shall be alto-

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gether impatient and restless, if deprived for any long Season of its wonted Enjoyments. And since we can scarce doubt, but that after it's departure, the Spirit still retains the same Habits and Affections, it had before; how wretched must be the Condition of that Soul, which, upon leaving the Body, finds she is, and for ever shall be incapable of those Sensations, in which alone she places all her Happiness? Therefore the Consideration of Death, rightly understood, is so far from countenancing a voluptuous Life; that it will excite every wise Man *to die daily*: that is, to disengage himself, as much as may be, from the Body and its Pleasures; that when he cannot enjoy, he may not want them.

AN habitual Attention to our latter End, would contribute, not only to wean our affections from the things of Time and Sense, but also to fix them upon Objects which are spiritual and eternal. As soon as the Connexion between the Mind and Body is dissolved, it is plain the Soul can be susceptible of no enjoyments, but what are of a purely spiritual Nature. It's Happiness in that disembodied State, so far as we can describe

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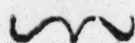


it, will arise from the Love of God; from the Consciousness of a growing Resemblance to him; from the Admiration of his Works and Perfections; from enlarged and satisfying Views of Truth; and from the Exercise of Benevolence and mutual Friendship with good Beings. If then we are not willing our happiness should terminate with the present Life, it concerns us to cultivate a Relish for these noble Entertainments; for tho' we should be translated into Heaven, when we die, if we die without any Taste for its refined Satisfaction, we cannot be happy in Heaven itself.

I MAY seem to wander beyond my Subject, but in reality it is scarce possible to meditate upon Death without entering into its momentous Consequences. While we view, in the most careless manner, the short Passage between this and the other World, we cannot forbear to glance upon the Scene which lies beyond it; a Scene, that presents to us the greatest and most interesting Realities, which the human Mind is capable of considering; and this above all shews the Importance of an Attention to our latter End. It is not only edifying in itself, but  
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by a natural, and almost necessary train of thought, leads us into Reflections upon other Subjects, in the highest degree useful and edifying. It guides the Imagination forward into Eternity; makes an hereafter, as it were, present to the Mind; awakens the apprehension of a future Judgment; and gives the Rewards and Punishments of the World to come, their full Weight and Impression upon us. Thus it will suggest to us, the most powerful Motives to a godly Life; and excite us by a patient continuance in well doing, to seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality.

DID we place Death habitually before our Eyes, it would engage us to apply ourselves with all our might to the proper Business of Life, and to pursue it without Intermission. It would represent the extream Folly and danger of Delays; warning us, that the present Season alone is our's; that if we count upon to morrow, we depend upon an absolute Uncertainty; and that while we stand trifling, and only framing distant Purposes, Opportunity may slip out of our Hands and be lost, beyond the Possibility of being retrieved. Hence we should be admonished to use

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ur Time, as it comes, to the best purpose, in SERM.  
mproving our Minds, and serving our Ge- XIX.  
eration ; not wasting the day-light of Life  
n Sloth and Impertinences ; but working  
while it is called to-day, because the Night  
s at hand, in which no Man can work.

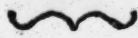
WHAT has been said may suffice to shew  
the Wisdom and Importance of *considering*  
*our latter End.*

You may object, that the Idea of Death  
is disagreeable and shocking ; that it will  
damp our Spirits, and render us indisposed  
for the gay Amusements and Pleasures of the  
world. Now if you mean by this, that it  
will check our Levity, and give our Thoughts  
a more serious turn, I acknowledge, it will ;  
but then I ask, supposing it does, where will  
be the harm ? I am so far from esteeming  
this a bad Circumstance, that I count it a-  
mong the Advantages, which flow from a  
Sense of our Mortality.——BUT will it not  
disturb our Peace, and fill us with fearful  
Apprehensions ? If so, where is the Prudence  
of dwelling so much upon it ? Would it not  
be wiser to follow the common Practice,  
and keep it out of our Heads as much as  
we can ? Is it not better blindly to meet our  
Fate,



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Fate, like the Brutes, than fixing our Eyes constantly upon Death, to live in continual Solicitude? To this it might be a sufficient Reply; that since Meditations upon Death, are so profitable to us, though they may be attended with some uneasiness, it would be worth our while to bear the Pain, for the sake of the Benefits arising from them. But this Matter deserves to be considered a little more fully.

WE might make the Idea of Death easy and familiar, by daily reflecting upon our latter End. The Awe, which it naturally strikes upon the Mind, will wear off in Proportion, as we encrease our Intimacy with it. But instead of cultivating this Acquaintance, we industriously avoid it; and the Surprise will add to the Horror of its Appearance, whenever it constrains, as sometimes it will constrain our Attention. There are, we know, certain Occasions, on which it is impossible for us to shun the Remembrance of Death. There are certain Seasons of Life, when it will have our Attention, our principal Attention, whether we will or no. Now there is but one Way to escape an Alarm upon such Occasions, and that is, daily

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to meditate upon Death, and prepare our-  
selves for it through the whole of Life. SERM.  
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The more we consider it, the less will it disturb us; whereas if the Thought is unusual and strange, the Uncommonness of it, will render it the more shocking, when it is forced upon us by Accident. 

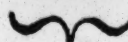
If you are not prepared for Death, you have most need of all to be mindful of it; that hence you may be warned to get yourself ready. If you are prepared, you have no reason to be distressed at the Prospect of dying. For to a good Man, what is there so formidable in Death? Is it the *Act of dying*? For aught we know, it may be attended with no extraordinary Pain; or if it be painful, it is over in an Instant. Shall he then tremble at the *Consequences* of Death? These to him are far from being dreadful; they are more than comfortable; they are joyful and glorious! Can it be so dismal to reflect, that he is hastening towards the final Period of his Affliction; which, if they were to have no Period, would be dismal indeed? Is there any thing so uncomfortable in the fore-sight of a speedy Removal out of a World, which abounds  
with

SERM. with Pain, and Guilt, and Folly, into a State  
 XIX. of eternal Rest, and unspeakable Felicity?  
 ~~~~~ Shall not the lively Expectation of such an  
 Event, support him under the Evils of Life,
 and enable him to maintain an uniform Se-
 renity? It will not only not injure his Tran-
 quillity, but secure it from being injured by
 other Accidents. It will not ruffle, but calm
 his Temper. Instead of disturbing, it will
 establish his Peace. Instead of impairing, it
 will greatly promote his good Humour and
 Chearfulness. It will supply him with a
 Fund of constant Joy, and keep him in the
 best Disposition for relishing the harmless
 Pleasures and Amusements of Life. We
 should therefore often consider our latter
 End, because this Exercise, at the same
 time that it improves the Mind, may also
 contribute to its Chearfulness and Comfort.

UPON the whole, such is our Forgetfulness
 of Death, and such the Wisdom of attending
 to it, that if there was a Voice, which
 might be heard through the whole Earth,
 it would be well employed in daily admo-
 nishing the Sons of Men, *remember you are*
mortal. Or if we had each of us a Guar-
 dian Angel, whose Office it should be, fre-
 quently

quently to whisper in our Ears this important Truth, it might be of infinite Service to us. GOD has given us Understanding for our Guardian Angel, which attending to the Voice of universal Nature, and learning from thence, that it is appointed for us and for all Men once to die, may supply the want of other Monitors. Let us willingly receive its Suggestions. Let us consider our own Death, as a certain Event; as in all probability very near; as impossible to lie at any great Distance. Through all our Pursuits, Business, and Amusements, let us carry along with us the Sense of our Mortality. Let us often revive it out of Choice; and when it comes by Accident, let us not seek to drive it away, as an impertinent Intruder, but entertain and cherish it as a welcome Guest.

WE should regard all the Pains and disorders of our Body, as so many Tendencies towards a Dissolution; as so many Symptoms of its near approach. When we see others falling on every side of us, it should always make one of our inmost Thoughts, that, for aught we know, our turn may be next. When we follow the Corps of a Friend or a neighbour to its long Home, we should
not



not suffer the Sentiment to escape us, that we ourselves must shortly be carried the same Way. We should frequently consider, what Numbers of those, who came along with us or followed us into Life, are gone out of it already; many of which were more likely to have been our Survivors, than we theirs. We live in a World where every Thing is dying around us; Plants and Trees, Animals and Men. We can scarce open our Eyes, but we meet with some Object or another, which points to the Tomb, and which, if we are not extreamly stupid, will afford us a Hint of our own Mortality. The flowers of the Field, the Shadows which glide over the Plains, the Vapour which appears, and then immediately vanishes, present us with lively Emblems of the Shortness of Human Life. All the Productions both of Art and Nature, the impregnable Edifice, the everlasting Hills, as they are called, and the great Globe itself, are tending to Decay and Dissolution. As for the Generations of Men, who are very properly distinguished by the Name of *Mortals*, they are an easy Prey to devouring Time,

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Time, and follow one another in quick Succession.

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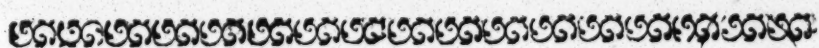
IN this World of Death, as it would be great Stupidity to forget our latter End, so it were madness to remember it, and at the same time neglect to prepare for it. The best Preparation for Death is a virtuous Temper, and a good Life. When once you are furnished with these Qualifications, you may view it approaching towards you with a calm and constant Mind, free from any timorous, unmanly Solitude.





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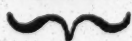
The Advantages of OLD-AGE, and
Comforts for the Pious under its
Infirmities.



ECCLES. xii. 1. Latter Part.

*While the evil Days come not, nor
the Years draw nigh, when thou
shalt say, I have no Pleasure in
them.*

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ISHONOUR not an *old Man*,
says the Son of *Syrach*; and he
backs his Advice with this Ar-
gument; *for some of us grow*
Old. For the same reason, one would think,
they, who are yet the farthest from old age,
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ould be curious to know, what sort of
ate that is, towards which, though it be
certain, if they shall ever arrive at it, they
e daily drawing nearer; and from which,
that was last born is at no great distance.
old age to be desired, or feared? Has it
ore of *good*, or *evil* in it? Is an enquiry, in
hich we are all of us interested. Unless
deed it be a point of Wisdom to confine
r views to the present, and not look be-
nd that, which lies immediately before

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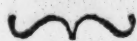
XX.

HOWEVER, since there are some good
en, who seem to be sensibly concerned at
e approach of old Age, as if they were a-
ut to enter upon *evil Days*, in which they
all enjoy little or no pleasure; I should
eem my Pains well bestowed, if I could
ntribute any thing to relieve their Anxiety,
shewing them that the most valuable Sa-
actions, of which human Nature is capa-
, may then be enjoyed in the greatest
fection; and that old Age has some con-
erable Advantages above any other Season
Life.

WERE it, in its own nature, evil and
etched, it must certainly be so to all alike.

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But if we look abroad in the world, we may observe many, that pass through it with Content and Chearfulness. Others indeed fret under it, as a grievous and insupportable Burden. But these, for the most part, cast the blame upon that, which does not deserve it; charging those Miseries to the account of old Age, for which they are indebted to nothing but their own past, or present Follies. No wonder, that one, who has wasted his Youth in Dissoluteness and Sloth, should be despicable and wretched in the decline of Life; no wonder, if Avarice, Peevishness, and ill Nature, which are sufficient Plagues at any Age, render the *old* uneasy to themselves, and disagreeable to others. On the contrary, an *old* Person, who has lived by the rules of Sobriety and Virtue, and preserves to the last a mild, affable, and humane temper, seldom fails to enjoy himself comfortably, be loved by his Friends, and respected by men.

THE Days of *Youth* are commonly esteemed happy Days; and yet a virtuous Age has more noble Satisfaction attending it, than virtuous Youth. Appetite and Passion, which raise daily Tumults in the time of Youth,

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gradually abate as we advance in Years, and sign the Soul at last to the mild and peaceable government of Reason. The Wisdom of the *old*, which is built upon Experience, at the same time that it secures them from making false Steps in Life, carries along with it an Authority, which is preferable to the Enjoyments of Youth. If, to be consulted, attended, and consulted with Defiance are instances of Pleasure, they are such as never fail a *Virtuous old Age*. I had almost said, that the Veneration, which is paid to the *hoary* Head of a righteous Man; the Consciousness of an honest Fame, firmly established; and the entire Confidence, which his Friends are encouraged to repose in him by a long Trial of his Integrity and Faithfulness, make him full amends for all the Infirmities he can labor under.

ESPECIALLY, if we add the confirmed State of his Virtue; which is both strengthened by long Habit, and secure from many dangerous Trials, to which Youth is obnoxious. It requires no small degree of constancy and Self-denial, for a person in the heat and sensibility of Youth, to resist the soft Allurements of Pleasure: But, he

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that is grown old in the practice of virtue; as he was always temperate in spite of Inclination, so now he has no Inclination to conquer. He overcame before; but then he was exposed to frequent Conflicts: whereas now sensual Pleasures, the most dangerous Enemies to the Integrity and Happiness of Men, have ceased their Attacks upon him and suffer him to enjoy his Virtue without giving him any further Disturbance.

HE that is just entering upon the path of Virtue, has all its Difficulties and Toils before him; and nothing to reflect upon, that can afford him substantial Delight. On the other hand, when the good Man arrives at *old Age*, he has finished in a great measure the Labors of Life; the Remembrance of which, and of his worthy conduct in the different Scenes he has passed through, inspires him with the divinest Joy, which the human Mind in this world is capable of entertaining. Let Youth collect all its flashy and jovial Pleasures, and lay them together in a fair Balance; the pleasure attending the review of one becoming action, will far outweigh them all. Wherefore, they must be infinitely short of his Happiness, who can re-

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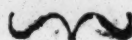
Comforts under its Infirmities.

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flect upon many Years, that have been filled up with a continued Series of such Actions. Nor, is it pleasant only to remember those Actions, which are admired by the world as great and illustrious. The review of a life spent in peaceful Innocence; in performing the private duties of Humanity and Friendship; in the honourable Cares of educating a Family; or in the silent pursuit of Knowledge and wisdom, begets a calm and rational Delight. When therefore *old Age* can produce such admirable Fruits, it were highly unjust to esteem it barren of enjoyments.

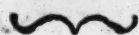
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BUT let us hear the Accusations, that are brought against it; the Principal of which are these four. *First*, That it makes the *Body* more infirm. *Secondly*, That by this means, it disables us for the Business of Life. *Thirdly*, That it robs us of almost all our Pleasures. And, *Lastly*, That it lies near to the Gates of Death. Now let us examine each of these Objections, and consider what weight they carry in them.

AN *old Man* has not the Strength of a Youth: No more has a *young Man* the Strength of a Bull, or a Horse. And are



these upon that account more excellent than him? Alas, what shameful Folly does it betray, to boast the Possession, or regret the Loss of that, in which we are all of us outdone by a brute Beast? Verily, he, that wishes himself younger, only that he might recover the strength of Bones and Sinews, he was once master of, is much more to be pitied for the stupidity of his Mind, than for the weakness of his Body.

IN many instances, however, where there is such a great decay of Strength, it is owing more to the Follies of Youth, than to the Effects of Age: For a Youth spent in Lewdness and Intemperance, commonly delivers up to Age a feeble and helpless Body: whereas they, who have not impaired their Constitutions by evil courses; usually retain, not indeed the full vigor of Youth, but such a degree of it, as enables them to go through all the Offices, that are expected from the old, and are most honourable to them. Is Age destitute of Strength? Strength is not required from Age. By the Laws and Customs of all civilized Nations, the old are excused from those Employments, to the discharge of which strength is necessary: so that

not

Comforts under its Infirmities.

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not only they are not called upon to do what they cannot, but oftentimes not so much as they can.

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IF it be said, many old Men are so weak, that they are wholly unfit for any Employment; this is not a Misfortune peculiar to Age, but common to bad Health at any season of Life. How often do we see *young* Persons also reduced so low, as to be incapable of doing any thing either for themselves or others? No wonder then, if the *old* sometimes fall into Weakness, when the *young* themselves cannot always escape it: Nay, it is certain the latter in general are more subject to sickness, and their Distempers are more grievous and violent.

BESIDES, that the Infirmities of the Old are so great, is often to be imputed to their own Neglect, and ill Management of themselves. They ought to resist the encroachments of Age, and the nearer Approach it makes, the more Diligence they should use in repelling it: they should guard against it, as against a Distemper; consulting their Health, using moderate Exercise; and such Diet both for kind and quantity, as may refresh Nature without loading it. Nor should they

they endeavor to support the Body only, but much more the Mind and Understanding: For these also, unless you supply, as it were, the Lamp with Oil, go out in old Age. They should therefore diligently exercise the Faculties of their Mind; and not suffer them to languish away in Drowsiness and Sloth.— Thus if they have it not, they will not much want the vigor of Youth; for enough will remain to perform the Offices that are suitable for them. At least, they will be able to assist their Friends with useful Advice, and form the Minds of Youth to Wisdom and Virtue.

WHEREFORE, it is not true (which was the *second* Thing to be considered) that *old* Age disables Men for the Business of life. From what Business, I ask, does it force them to abstain? From that, which requires the Strength of Youth? And are there no affairs, that may be administered by a prudent Mind in a weak Body? Does he then do nothing, who prescribes to others what they shall do, and shews them how they may perform it in the best manner? Does he, that governs his Family, instructs his children, relieves the perplexity of his Neighbors,

bors, and guides them to the right Management of their Affairs ; does he all this while do nothing? The Old, by their Counsel and Directions, may render Services of the greatest importance, both to private persons and public Societies ; upon the account of which, they ought to be, and in all civilized Countries have been revered, as the most useful and valuable part of Mankind. Accordingly, in the best regulated States, Offices of the highest Dignity and Moment have been reserved for them ; which it was not thought safe to entrust in the hands of rash and unexperienced Youth. What an honourable and useful Employment is it, of which no bodily Weakness can render them incapable, to communicate Wisdom to the Young ; to prevent or correct their Errors, and excite them to a laudable and worthy Behavior ?

THOSE therefore widely err, who deny the Old any share in the Offices of life. Just, as if they should say, that the Pilot does nothing towards navigating a Ship, because he sits quietly at the Helm ; while some run about the Decks, and others manage the Sails, and others labor at the Pump : though,
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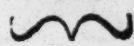
SERM. in the mean time, it is he, that assigns to
 XX. each of them his Work, and steers the Vessel
 ~~~~~ in its right Course. The *old* cannot do what  
 the *young* can; but they can do that which  
 is far better and more honourable; and for  
 which Youth is altogether unqualified. For  
 it is not by brutal Force and Activity of  
 Body, that great things are brought to pass;  
 but by Counsel, Authority, and Prudence,  
 which are so far from being lessened, that  
 they are encreased by Age.

BUT their Memory may fail them: So it  
 may indeed, if they will not be at the pains  
 to keep it clear and sound by habitual Exer-  
 cise. In this respect there is a great Diffe-  
 rence between the Mind and the Body; for  
 the Body may be weakened with Exercise;  
 whereas the more we exert the Faculties of  
 our Minds, the more active they grow: But  
 when they are suffered to remain unemploy-  
 ed, especially in *old* Age, they decay insen-  
 sibly. Wherefore the *old*, that diligently ex-  
 ert the powers of the Soul, and do not in-  
 dulse themselves in Remissness and Sloth,  
 for the most part enjoy such a strength of  
 Memory, as is sufficient for the Occasions  
 and Business of life. They seldom forget,  
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what they are solicitous to remember ; as where they have laid their money, or how much is owing them, and by whom. Many can relate the History of a long Life with wonderful Exactness, and retain an immense Treasure of Knowledge, to which they are still making daily Additions.

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BUT I proceed to the *third* objection against *old Age* ; which was, That *it deprives us of many Pleasures* : namely, of those Pleasures, that depend upon the Body. O glorious Privilege of *Old Age* ! To be freed from that which is the worst circumstance attending on Youth. For Nature has punished Mankind with no greater evil than sensual Pleasure ; by the greedy desires of which, they are transported to rash and unbridled Indulgence. Hence the Ruin of Families ; Hence the Treachery of Friends ; Hence Rapine and Sedition, by which Governments are overturned, and Nations rendered miserable. In short, there is no kind or degree of Wickedness, which the lust of Pleasure does not occasion. And then as to Adultery, Fornication, and every Crime of that sort, they are excited only by the baits of Pleasure. And whereas God has given us  
nothing



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nothing more excellent than our Reason, nothing is more prejudicial to this divine and sacred endowment, than bodily Pleasure. To be satisfied of this, we need only conceive a man to be under the lively Impressions of it; so long as he is thus joyfully affected, it is plain he has not the full Command of his own Mind; nor can make any thing out by Thought and Reasoning: Wherefore nothing is less desirable than sensual Pleasure, which, if it were great enough in Degree and long in Continuance, would extinguish all the lustre and glory of the Mind.

If you ask, to what purpose these Reflections upon Pleasure? I answer, that we may be sensible, what thanks are due to Age, if it takes away these mean Desires, which we had found ourselves unable to correct by Wisdom and Reason. Is *old* Age debarred from the costly Feast and flowing Bowl? it is also debarred from Indigestion, Debauch, and broken Sleep. Nevertheless, if we allow Pleasure to be of some Value, though the *old* cannot perhaps relish so well high Feasting; yet they are capable of enjoying moderate Entertainments. Nor ought we to rate the enjoyment of a Feast by the Pleasures of  
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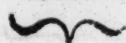
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the Body, so much, as by the Society and Converse of our Friends. Age, therefore, deserves double Praise; both as it blunts the Appetites of the Body, and sharpens the desire of friendly Conversation.

YET I do not see, that it loseth all Perception of those Pleasures, that are referred wholly to the Palate: Its sense of them is not indeed so lively as in Youth; but (which is more than equivalent) its desires are less uneasy and violent. Whatever then becomes of these brutal Pleasures, if *age* leaves us the noble Enjoyments of the Mind; if it even improves them; not to praise it, at least, to murmur against it, were to be very ungrateful. How delightful is it for the Mind to have escaped from under the Tyranny of Ambition, Lust, Enmity and Strife, and to feel itself at Liberty to enjoy itself, and consult only its own Improvements? If it have moreover a little Food, as it were, of Knowledge and Study; nothing can be more agreeable than a retired and peaceful Age. Not to mention the Enjoyment of old and well established Friendships; which, like wine, improve with Years; nor the pleasures of the Field and garden; nor such as attend the  
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finer arts, which many have pursued to the utmost extremity of a long Life. If to all these we add, the Satisfaction flowing from a Review of many worthy Actions, and from the Authority, which results from its Wisdom and Experience, we shall find, that Age abounds in solid Pleasure above any other Season of Life. You will observe however, that in this whole Discourse I am praising only that old Age, which hath been preceded by a laudable Youth, and still goes forward in the path of Virtue : It is this alone, which can reap the fruits of Honor in their full Perfection ; while that, which claims veneration to a gray Head without Wisdom and Virtue, will be justly ridiculed for its groundless Pretensions.

SOME other things are alledged against the pleasantness of *old* Age, which admit of an easy answer. He that lives to be Old, says one, must see many ungrateful Sights ; he might as well have said, many *grateful* ones. The Young also, often meet with disagreeable Occurrences——But, says the same author——among all the Evils of Age, this is worst ; that in this state a Man must be sensible he is odious to all about him.——Rather,



ther, highly agreeable, if it be not his own Fault : For, as good natur'd old Men delight in the Young, and are eas'd under the pressures of Age by their Esteem and Respect; so the Young of best Dispositions love the Old, whose Gravity is tempered with good Humour and Chearfulness.

BUT some are passionate, sour, fretful, hard to please; and which are worst of all, dissolute or covetous : But these are the faults of Temper, and not of Age. Moroseness indeed, and the like Vices have an Excuse; which, though not just, is somewhat plausible; for they think themselves despised and neglected, But as a dissolute old Man is the most odious Beast; so a covetous one is the most compleat Fool upon earth. How monstrous and detestable is it, to retain sensual Habit, when, in the natural course of things, both the desire and power to gratify it, ought to have been extinguished? How absurd and stupid, the less of Life remains, to lay up the more for the Support of it?

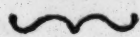
It follows, that we consider, the *fourth* and *last* Objection against *old Age*, *The approach of Death*: which can never be far from the Old; and must, it seems, upon that

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account, disturb them with perpetual Solitude. Miserable Age indeed ; which has not learned in so long a time, that Death is no misfortune, but a signal Blessing to a good Man : Since it will put a final Period to all his Miseries, and remove him into a State of perfect Happiness, that shall never end.

IF, on the other hand, Death ought to be feared ; at what *Age* have we no reason to fear it ? What young Person is so foolish, as to be confident, he shall live till Night ? The Lives of the Young are exposed to more Accidents, than the Old. They catch Distempers more easily : Their Sicknefs is more violent ; their Recovery more doubtful : Hence few arrive at *old Age* ; otherwise we should have more Wisdom and Virtue in the world ; For, Understanding, Reason and Prudence distinguish the Old, to whom it is owing, that human Life is not a more disordered Scene. But not to wander from my Subject,, do we not daily see, that Death is common to every Age ? Why then is *old Age* particularly accused of that, which equally belongs to every Season of Life ?

BUT, the Youth hopes for many Days ; so cannot the *old Man*. The Youth's hopes  
are

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are ill-grounded ; For what is more foolish than to rest our Confidence upon that, which is quite uncertain ? The *old* Man has not room so much as for *Hope* : He is still happier than the Youth ; He has already enjoyed what the other has no great Reason to expect : One wishes to live long, the other has lived long. Though alas, what is there in human Life, that may be esteemed long ? Suppose we live eighty, or an hundred Years ? yet to a Mind, that considers *Eternity*, nothing will seem long, that is confined within any Bounds : For when the End is come, that, which is past, is gone ; that only remains to us, which we have made our own by Virtue and honourable Actions. Hours, and Days, and Months and Years fly swiftly away : Past time never returns ; and what the future will prove cannot be known. We should, therefore, none of us greedily covet the remainder of Life ; which, whether its Days be many or few, must be of trifling account with regard to its length, though of infinite moment, according as we spend it well or ill.

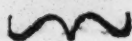
Do the old die ? It is with the free consent of Nature ; but the same thing happens to Youth, while Nature resists and struggles

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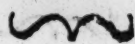
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against it. The Young die; as when a vehement Fire is extinguished with Water; but *old* Age gradually goes out of its own accord, and without Violence. And as Fruits when green are pulled off by Force, but fall of themselves, when they are fully ripe; so Life is torne away from Youth with Violence, but drops easily from *old* Age. The sense of dying is but momentary, and cannot, therefore, be much; especially to the Old: And as to what follows upon Death; it depends upon that, which has gone before it. But we should meditate upon these things from our Youth upwards, that we may despise Death; which, he that fears, whether he be Old or Young, can possess no firm Tranquillity of Mind: For we are each of us sure of dying; and for aught we know, this very Day. How then should a man enjoy any solid Comfort in his Life, if he is afraid of Death, which hangs over him every Moment?

BUT to *bid farewell for ever to the Satisfaction of Life!* Rather say, *to the Miseries of it.* For what great Enjoyment is there in this Life, considered by itself? But let it have as much as it will, it grows at last into Indifference.

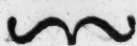


difference and Satiety. Numberless are the Evils of this earthly being; upon which it were easy to enlarge, if that would lessen them. Nothing here is certain, but what is past; with respect to the future, no Man is so firmly established in Prosperity, as to be assured whether he has more reason to hope or fear it. It cannot be denied, that considering merely present Enjoyment, it had been better for many, if they had died sooner. Wherefore Death may probably withdraw us from future Calamities; at least it will place us beyond the Danger of them.

DID Life and Sense expire together, such an event, if it would not be very desirable, would have nothing in it, that reasonably ought to fill us with Terror. But, if on the contrary to die out of this World, is to be born into Heaven; if the end of this mortal Life is the Commencement of a blessed State, which alone deserves to be called *Life*, and in which the Mind shall be forever advancing in Happiness and Perfection; certainly a good Man should expect Death, not only without Fear, but with Chearfulness and Joy.

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A VIRTUOUS old Age is, therefore, in a better Condition than Youth; because, being in all appearance nearer to Death, it is also as much nearer to Heaven. Youth is in the midst of a stormy Sea, in which it is exposed to many Dangers: The *old* person has well-nigh finished his Course; and after a long voyage, is just entering the desired Haven: Wherefore, if God would leave it in his Choice to grow *young* again; Wisdom would justify him in refusing the Offer.

O HAPPY Day! When he shall be suffered to escape out of the Body; when he shall depart from among this confused Croud, and join himself to the divine assembly of celestial Spirits: When he shall come to the City of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem; to JESUS the Mediator of the new Covenant; and to GOD the Judge of all: And to an innumerable Company of Angels; and to the general Assembly and Church of the First-Born, that are enrolled in Heaven; and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect! There he will again enjoy such valuable Friends as had left this World before him; and thither he will shortly be followed, by those, that mourned his Departure from Earth.

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*Comforts under its Infirmities.*

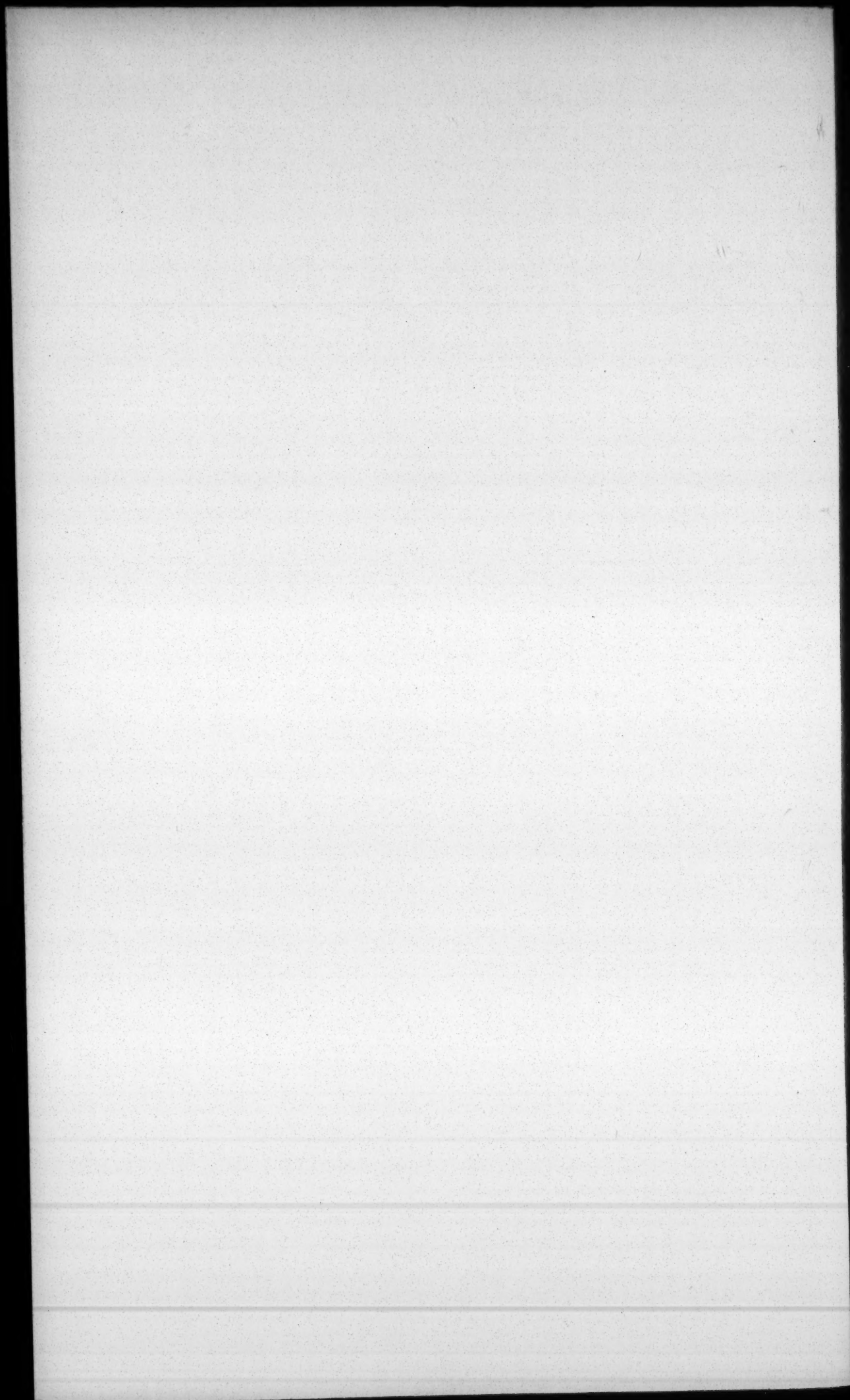
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THE near Prospect, and lively Hope of these glorious Events, will support the Old under all their Infirmities; and make the Decline of Life not only tolerable, but joyful and pleasant. No mortal can here attain to perfect Happiness; but that Man seems to come the nearest to it, who has behind him a long Life, honourably spent; and immediately before him the enlivening Prospect of a blessed Immortality.

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*The End of the First VOLUME.*





See an account of the author in the Monthly  
Repository of Theology and General Literature,  
vol. V. 1810. p. 327, written by Wm. Turner of New-  
-castle





